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SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

AND THEIR RESULTS

AN ESSAY IN PSYCHOLOGY AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION

BY

AELFRIDA TILLYARD

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PREFACE

In the years 1916 and 1924 I delivered courses of lectures (first of all in lecture rooms at the psychological and physiological laboratories, and afterwards in a college lecture room) on "Spiritual Exercises in the Higher Religions, and their Psychological Results." It was chiefly through these lectures that I became aware of the deep interest taken by thoughtful people in practical mysticism. Spiritual exercises are mysticism in its most practical form. They are methods invented to train the soul for communion with the unseen.

Wherever men have revolted against formalism and over-intellectualism in religion, they have felt the need of meditation in order to bring their souls into touch with spiritual realities. Meditation, when systematized and deliberately taught, becomes what is known as "spiritual exercises." Unfortunately these exercises very often in course of time grow formal, in their turn, and may assume debased and fantastic forms. The pure impulse of spirituality has passed; nothing but the "exercise" remains. It is as if an athlete who had entered a gymnasium in order to train his body for a race, remained there forgetful of the object with which he came, and gave himself up to a series of contortions, in themselves meaningless and possibly harmful. This downward tendency of spiritual exercises which were intended to exalt and to purify, is very widespread in the non-Christian religions. The "dancing dervish" whirling for money before the eyes of the Western tourist, the Hindu beggar immobilized in what should be a prayer posture in order to excite the gaping wonder of ignorant onlookers, have little connection with the Mohammedan mystic who meditated on heavenly

harmony, or the Hindu holy man who spent long hours in contemplation. Christianity has been almost entirely free from such extravagances, and the practice of meditation has remained spiritual, devoted to spiritual ends. The original quest, however, was the same. Christian and non-Christian alike have felt the need of direct personal contact with spirit, while both have devised, and found useful, methods for quieting and uplifting the mind.

The object of this book, then, is to bring to the notice of students of mysticism and of religion, spiritual exercises as practised at the present day among Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and Mohammedans. As far as I am aware, this is the first time that any such survey and comparison of different prayer methods has been attempted, and I cannot expect that my book should be free from mistakes. I have, indeed, based my statements on facts given by recognized authorities, and I have as far as possible supplemented them by first-hand information. The book should be of interest to psychologists and to students of comparative religion, as well as to Christians whose attitude towards mysticism is practical.

The Christian reader is asked not merely to note the dangers and aberrations that his own mystical tradition and teaching have successfully avoided, but to be moved to wonder at the high heritage that has been handed down to him by his Church. If he will, he may discipline himself by spiritual exercises as the saints disciplined themselves. As they attained to union with God, so, too, may he.

Thirty or forty years ago the word "mysticism" was suspect, and it would have been a bold man who dared to call himself a mystic, though there was no lack of unavowed mysticism—that is, of intense and vital personal religion. The recent mystical revival is, however, an admitted fact. Scientists and saints alike pay attention to mysticism, and have theories on its nature. Books on mysticism are eagerly bought, lectures

on mysticism are well attended. We are alive as we have never been before to the powers which the human mind possesses of attuning itself to the divine.

Among Catholics, Anglican and Roman, mysticism centres chiefly round sacramentalism, the enshrining of the inward and spiritual in the visible form of the Sacrament. In the Society of Friends, mysticism is based on the doctrine of the Inward Light. With the Evangelical Churchmen, the Wesleyans, and some other Free Churchmen, mystical experience starts with a sense of sin, and belief in the saving power of Jesus Christ. Even in the Presbyterian Church, where the intellectual level of preaching is probably higher than that in any other denomination, the religion preached is not so much intellectual as mystical. It is so in answer to a need. Men and women everywhere want to know how they may commune with God.

Up to a certain point music can be taught. So can painting or any of the other arts. Up to a certain point it is possible to teach the art of communion with God. Spiritual exercises contain the rules and technique of the art. For success, more is needed than rules and technique; in this case, pure intention and the grace of God.

My thanks are due to the following scholars who have afforded me valuable help in my book: Professor E. G. Browne, Professor Duncan Macdonald, Professor Reynold Nicholson, Professor de la Vallée Poussin, Dr. C. S. Myers, Dr. J. D. Anderson, Mirza 'Issa Sadiq, Hakuju Ui, Surendranath Maitra, Miss Ridding; also to a number of priests, monks, nuns and devout lay men and women who would prefer not to be mentioned by name. To Dr. Thomas of the University Library I owe more gratitude than I can well express.

A. T.

CAMBRIDGE, 1927.

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SPIRITUAL EXERCISES AND THEIR RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

The Mystic.

THERE have always been, and will always be, a certain class of men to whom experience is more important than action, and for whom the great events of life are not connected with external circumstance, but with the development of consciousness. These are the mystics, the seekers after some ultimate reality with which they can commune and in whose being they find satisfaction. The mystic, to hazard a definition, *is the man to whom the spiritual world*—that is, the world of religious experience—*is more real than the material world.*

The man or woman, however, who would concentrate attention on the spiritual world needs a type of mind differing from that of the ordinary man, or at least to cultivate a different set of faculties. Certain religious experiences of a very intense kind, such as sudden conversion, bring with them, as it were, the requisite form of consciousness. The eyes and ears may be closed to external impressions, while what the mystics have termed "the senses of the soul" are awake to receive messages or pictures believed to be divine. The mystic, however, needs to possess *at will*, and to have under his control, this power of withdrawing his attention from the thoughts and scenes of everyday life, and of concentrating it on the subject of his meditation or on communications to be received from God.

Hence the need of spiritual exercises.

Spiritual exercises are practices designed to bring the aspirant into communion with ultimate reality.

This definition, be it noted, is wide enough to include the meditation of the Christian, burning to draw near to the personal God whom he so ardently loves, and the quiet introspection of the Buddhist, who, far from looking for a message from without, finds reality in the perfect serenity of his own mind.[1]

Formal Meditations Recognized and Taught.

In all the great religions there exist, at the present time, definite systems of self-culture for the mystic, and teachers capable of giving guidance as to the exact manner in which the instructions are to be carried out. Many of the rules and methods have never been committed to writing. This is particularly the case in India, where the guru, or teacher, passes on by word of mouth exactly what he has learnt from his own preceptor.

It is interesting to the psychologist, however, to notice that, where the seeker after truth has had no teacher and has stood outside the great mystical traditions, he evolves for himself something of the same exercises and meditations which he has not had the opportunity of learning. Thus Stephen Grellet[2] writes: "If I took a book to read, a single line would detain me for hours. Sometimes I have been a whole week in reading and pondering a single chapter in the Bible."

[1] Objection may perhaps be made to the word "designed." Thus the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, which are *apt* to produce mystical states of consciousness, were not written with that object, but in order to convict men of sin. Père Poulain, too, the learned writer of *Des Grâces d'Oraison,* would certainly quarrel with my definition, for he holds that no state is mystical unless the seer is absolutely powerless to induce it himself.

[2] *Memoirs,* edited by Benjamin Seebohm, p. 31. Etienne de Grellet du Mabillier, born 1773 at Limoges; left France owing to Revolution, joined the Society of Friends at Long Island in 1796; travelled all over America, Canada, Europe, and part of Asia in the service of the Gospel.

This is "discursive meditation," suitable for the beginner, and practised by him in the early days of his religious life. Later on Grellet preferred "silently to wait upon the Lord," and to "feel the refreshing from the Lord's divine presence." That is to say, he discovered for himself, or, if you prefer it, God taught him, the superior value of contemplation.

Another example of the self-taught mystic is Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, whose autobiography should be studied by all students of religious psychology. In cutting himself off from the superstitions of orthodox Hinduism, he also deprived himself of the advantages of a guru, but by prayer and meditation and a saintly life he achieved the training of his spiritual faculties. His religious life is strikingly of the English Protestant type in its independence and individuality, and with its insistence on direct access to God.

Teachers.

It is generally felt, however, that a mystic needs a teacher for the training of his religious consciousness. Père Poulain, stating the Catholic view, lays great stress on the need for a competent director, who must be "prudent, of sound understanding, pious, learned, and kind."[1] It is he who will help the aspirant to know his own soul and to purge it of sin before he enters on meditations. It is the director's duty to regulate the ascetic practices, suggest suitable exercises, console his penitent in aridity, and restrain indiscreet ardour when he is receiving consolations and experiencing sensible devotion.

So, too, St. John of the Cross, the Venerable Augustine Baker, and many others, urge the need for a good director, adding, nevertheless, that injudicious direction is worse than none. M. Albert Farges[2] points out

[1] *Des Grâces d'Oraison* (Eng. trans. by L. L. Y. Smith, *The Graces of Interior Prayer*), p. 477.
[2] *Mystical Phenomena*, p. 11.

how necessary it is for the director to be versed in mysticism. "A director, no matter how sincerely pious he may be . . . if he does not know that beyond his ordinary meditative and affective prayer there is a prayer of simple regard called *active* or *acquired contemplation*, and beyond this again another contemplation, truly *infused* or *passive*, granted by God to whom it pleases Him—such a director is a man who does not know his business at all; he is incompetent and may do grave harm to those entrusted to his care. He may paralyze the action of God on such chosen souls, and keep them, contrary to their vocation, in an inferior state, where they will mark time instead of making progress; they will be fortunate, indeed, if this ignorant director does not welcome with a sceptical smile, perhaps with a jest and sarcasm, that which may well be a veritable gift of God."

The closest spiritual relationship is said to exist between the teacher and his pupil. Often the director is to be adored as though he represented God Himself.

Thus Henri Delacroix,[1] writing of St. Teresa, says: "After the year 1575 it was Father Jerome Gratian who became the supreme director of her soul. She undertook to consider him both in her inner and her outer life as holding the place of God Himself."[2]

In Hinduism the meeting with a teacher is classed, with the study of the sacred books and the verification of tradition by one's own experience, as an indispensable preliminary to attainment. Guru worship is one

[1] *Études d'Histoire et de Psychologie du Mysticisme*, p. 80.

[2] Many writers on St. Teresa would, however, hardly agree with Delacroix. For instance, Professor E. Allison Peers, in his *Studies of the Spanish Mystics*, assumes that, though St. Teresa wrote her books at the command of her directors, her mystical life evolved itself quite independently from them. "How well my confessor and I get on together," he quotes St. Teresa as writing, in reference to P. Gratian (p. 150). "He makes me eat more than I am wont as a penance, or sends me to recreation." This indicates a relationship very different from that suggested by Henry Delacroix.

of the characteristics of the more superstitious of the modern Hindu sects. In every book on Yoga, too, the supreme importance of the guru is insisted on.

"Without the kind grace of the Guru, and without indifference to worldly pleasures," says a modern Hindu writer, the Swâtmârâm Swâmi, "the real cognition of the truth and the state of Samâdhi are utterly impossible."[1]

Personal service to the guru, such as washing his feet and cooking his food, is prescribed, both in Hinduism and Buddhism, as part of the daily life of the seeker after truth.

No less important and worthy of reverence is the Sufi shaykh. Such a man must be far advanced on the spiritual path. His very breath and touch must be holy, and he should be able to work miracles. He is particularly required to have the power of thought-reading, in order that he may conveniently judge of his pupil's progress. In Jewish mystical sects the teacher must be not only holy, but learned.

Meditation practised chiefly among the Monastic Orders.

While, theoretically speaking, the ordinary layman, immersed in the affairs of the world, may meditate if he so desires, it usually happens in practice that systematized spiritual exercises are used by men and women who have adopted the religious life. Solitude, detachment, the absence of cares and preoccupations are necessary for the man who would cultivate the mystic consciousness. A small amount of pious reading and thinking must generally form part of the life of the religiously-minded layman, but he has not often the leisure or the serenity of mind necessary for the development of his spiritual powers to their fullest extent.

[1] *Hatha-Yoga Pradipika*, p. 75.

Meditation among the Laity in America.

It is, however, remarkable that, owing to the influence of Eastern teaching and Eastern ideas in the United States at the present day, meditation is very widely practised among men and women of the educated classes living ordinary life in the world.

I quote a spiritual exercise recommended in *The Hindu-Yogi Science of Breath*," by "Ramacharaka" (the assumed name of an American writer), a book which has had a great sale in the United States, and which is much used as a guide to meditation.

"Exercise for soul-consciousness:[1]

"Place your body in a relaxed position. Breathe rhythmically and meditate on the real Self, thinking of yourself as an entity independent of the body, although inhabiting it, and being able to leave it at will. Think of yourself, not as the body, but as a spirit, and of your body as but a shell, useful and comfortable, but not as a part of the real *you*. Think of yourself as an independent being, using the body only as a convenience. While meditating, ignore the body entirely, and you will find that you will often become almost entirely unconscious of it, and will seem to be out of the body, to which you may return when you are through with the exercise."

An American woman of my acquaintance used regularly to practise this exercise, and claimed that the sensation which she experienced of being able to detach herself from the body had a most calming and uplifting effect on the mind.

It may, however, be extremely dangerous to undertake a course of spiritual exercises if the motive be not a religious one, and the experimenter be merely in search of strange and abnormal sensations. Meditation should always be accompanied by moral effort, and by the practice of sane and bracing virtues such as unselfishness, service of others, and so forth. Otherwise

[1] P. 70.

there is a real danger of mental balance being completely upset. The spiritual exercises act powerfully on the delicate mechanism of the mind, the will is weak and unable to exert the necessary control, and complete chaos may result. Short of this, much harm may be done. I know a woman who was very anxious to experience superconsciousness, and for many months used the meditations recommended in an American handbook. Nothing happened, except that she felt a confused medley of exciting sensations. She determined to take a further step and to use a drug which, she was assured, would produce the desired feelings. What the drug did produce was an illness which lasted for several weeks and which left her much disgusted with what she imagined to be mysticism and mystical experience.

Another woman I know, who spent long hours in Eastern meditation, certainly succeeded in inducing unusual states of mind, but she was neglecting her ordinary duties and becoming unfit for the normal relationships of life. In this case the motive which led her to take up meditation was intellectual curiosity. She had no teacher to guide her.

A number of the books which circulate widely in America are of a very debased kind, the object of meditation being, not union with the divine, but the glorification of the individual ego, and the attainment of wealth and power.

It cannot be too clearly stated that there is only one motive which justifies meditation, and that is the desire to attune the mind for communion with spiritual reality, under whatever form spiritual reality may be conceived. Mere inquisitiveness, spiritual pride, the wish to raise oneself above the ordinary run of devout people, or love of the strange and the occult, all lead the seeker to disaster.

Purity of intention, then, is the first essential for the man or woman who would be a mystic. The wise spiritual director will be quick to detect and point out unworthy or mixed motives in his pupils.

Places suitable for Meditation.

Next in importance to the teacher is the place where meditation is to be carried out. A church, hallowed by holy associations and by the prayers of the faithful, would seem to offer the most suitable environment. St. John of the Cross, however, says[1] that it is better "to make choice of a solitary and even wild spot" rather than pray in a church. St. Ignatius Loyola meditated by running water, St. Francis of Assisi on the open hillside. Indian ascetics, from remotest times until now, have preferred jungles and forests to all other localities. Not only have professed sannyasis like Ramakrishna Paramahamsa attained to Samadhi while meditating at the foot of a tree, but Keshab Chandra Sen of the Brahma-Samaj, and his disciples, owned a forest abode for religious culture, where they sat under the trees on hides of tigers and other animals, and spent long hours in thought.[2]

In the Buddhist sacred books there are to be found detailed instructions as to the type of place suited for monks to dwell in. The recluse must remember to choose his place of meditation according to the predominant influence in his mind. If, for instance, he is governed by rága (desire) he should select a hut with a dirty floor and clay walls, or one made of straw, or sit in the shelter of a rock or somewhere that is covered with dust and very uncomfortable.[3] Should he, however, be filled with anger and hatred (dwésa), he may choose a clean, pleasant, and beautiful place, and need not shun the sight of men. While the priest under the influence of móha (unwiseness, ignorance of the truth) should reside in an open place not surrounded by trees.

The tradition of holy places, of groves or hill-tops, deserts and wildernesses, where God is specially to be

[1] *Ascent of Mount Carmel,* trans. David Lewis, p. 359.
[2] See J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India,* p. 52.
[3] Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism,* pp. 154-5.

found, is, one need hardly point out, one of the oldest beliefs in the world, and it survives in all lands up to the present day. Even a modern French author, unspoilt by the critical spirit around him, can write of these sacred spots with a fine emotional certainty.[1]

"There are places which draw the soul from its lethargy, places surrounded and bathed in mystery, chosen from all time to be the seat of religious emotion. Such places carry us away, and make us admit, almost without knowing it, that there are facts on a plane higher than our ordinary existence.

"We are led to acknowledge a more secret meaning in life than that with which we are ordinarily familiar. Without explaining anything to us, these spots communicate to us a religious interpretation of our destiny. The soul sees in them a force such as there is in beauty or genius. She cannot approach them without recognizing them. There are places where the spirit breathes." [2]

I remember feeling that I was on holy ground when I climbed the hill of Fourvières at Lyons. Here the pilgrims' path runs through the Garden of the Rosary steeply upwards to a Catholic basilica, where in a side chapel stands the wonder-working image of the Virgin. The queer little black figure is said to represent our Lady, but surely it is a statue of some pagan goddess, protectress of the hill that was sacred from the dawn of history.

Ethical Obligations.

It is expressly laid down in every religion that no man or woman in a state of sin may undertake spiritual exercises. It is usually considered necessary not only to keep the precepts which are binding on persons living an ordinary life, but to fulfil other obligations also. Vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and the

[1] Maurice Barrès, *La Colline Inspirée*, pp. 4, 5.
[2] *Cf.* St. John of the Cross, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

like are often taken. These things are not merely considered as excellent in themselves, but are chiefly valuable as conducing to that serenity and detachment without which no meditations can produce good results. The man who has no possessions will not worry about his affairs. He who is vowed to obedience will not have to disturb his mind by problems of conduct. Even a sin inadvertently committed "under obedience" is no sin at all.

The question of chastity is a more difficult one. It may be urged that, while the absence of wife and children keeps a man's mind free from anxiety, the possibility of temptation is unlikely to make for serenity —at least so, in practice, the saints found it. There seems to be a general belief that continence predisposes to spiritual experience. Some Hindu yogis have taught that the sexual energy, if not employed in the usual way, may by suitable meditations be "drawn up into the brain,"[1] there to give the seer the power of penetrating into the spiritual world. This process is known as "storing up ojas (energy)." The matter deserves the careful attention of psychologists, but does not come within the scope of this book.

Asceticism.

Ascetic practices as a preliminary to meditation have always been employed and recommended by the mystics, though in many cases they have been abandoned as the saint has advanced along the way of perfection. Thus the Blessed Henry Suso, after terrible austerities lasting for fifteen years, received a divine command to desist. There is no doubt that the mystic finds, in the early stage of his religious life, a certain denying and even weakening of the body to be helpful. "Penance and still more penance!" cries St. John of the Cross, though he adds that it must be allied with

[1] This would appear to be roughly equivalent to the "sublimation of libido" insisted on by the twentieth century psycho-analyst.

obedience. Even in Protestant Christianity, where the whole tendency of the system is against mortification, we often find a similar phenomenon. Of two well-known American Quakers, Benjamin Lay, who dwelt in a cave near Pennsylvania, took as food nothing but vegetables, and drank only water; while John Woolman added to his other restrictions that of never wearing dyed clothing nor eating and drinking out of costly vessels. Stephen Grellet writes in his journal that for five years he would eat no meat, because the Lord forbade it. On one occasion,[1] for fear of being peculiar, he tried to eat meat, but was unable. When his "release" came, the free use of everything in Creation was allowed him, if he received it with moderation and thankfulness.

I have myself known a young girl, a member of the Church of England, who deprived herself of food and sleep to such an extent that she arrested her physical growth. Many instances might be given of the spontaneous practising of asceticism among those who have never been taught that it is supposed to have a moral value.

Indifference to bodily comfort, it is felt, tends to detachment of mind. Also there is a certain state of extreme lucidity caused by fasting, physical fatigue and the strain of concentration, which is peculiarly favourable to the development of mystical states of consciousness. Modern thought, however, looks with suspicion on any religious experience to which fasting and want of sleep may have predisposed the mind. In Christian convents and monasteries at the present day the tendency is to discourage extreme asceticism. For instance, the Order of the Sisters of Nazareth (a Roman Catholic teaching and nursing sisterhood, which supports itself by begging) does not allow any extra fasts and penances in addition to those ordered by the Rule. It is the usual practice in religious houses for special permission from the spiritual director to be necessary before unusual austerities may be undertaken. St. Teresa

[1] P. 44.

did not believe in unwise penances, leading to nervous exhaustion and counterfeit trances. She writes: "This state (a sort of intoxication or slumber) lasted with a certain person for eight hours, during which time she was neither insensible, nor had she any thought of God. She was cured by being made to eat and sleep well, and to leave off some of her penances."[1] Of such a state produced by unwise asceticism the saint writes: "They fancy this is a trance, and call it one, but I call it nonsense."[2]

Asceticism of Two Kinds.

It should, however, be clearly understood that asceticism is of two kinds. The first proceeds from the conviction that the bearing of pain is in itself a meritorious act, either because it propitiates an angry Deity or because it is an act of warfare against that evil creature, Matter; the second from the centring of love and of the powers of enjoyment on spiritual rather than on physical delights. The first form is perverted and irrational, the second is necessary to the ascent of man, who desires to raise himself above the brute creation. With the latter type of asceticism is also to be found another motive for self-denial and extreme simplicity of life, and that is the wish to be partaker of the sufferings of the poor, or of some beloved prophet, or of humanity as a whole. It was some such motive which made the modern Persian prophet, Baha'u'llah, observe the strictest of fasts all his life. Such was the reason for the asceticism of Dr. Collins, the saintly Bishop of Gibraltar, who, even when gravely ill, voluntarily underwent many hardships, and who died with the words "the fellowship of pain" on his lips. Love of Christ has urged many a Christian to strive for a share in His sufferings. In doing so, however, the instinct of

[1] *The Interior Castle,* p. 88 (trans. Benedictines of Stanbrook).
[2] *Ibid.*

love has at times become perverted, and the mere enduring of torture has come to be looked on as meritorious. Henry Suso with his nailed cross is an example of this morbid desire to participate in the pain of Christ.

The chief value of asceticism is the training which it provides for the *will*. The point has been made so often by writers concerning the mystic way that there is no need to labour it here. If progress is to be made towards union with God, the will must be strengthened. Lofty aspirations, sweetness in devotion, a mind well trained in concentration, will never bring the pilgrim to his goal, if his will remain weak. There will come times when the wings of his aspiration fail him, when delight in prayer vanishes, when his mind is unable to dwell on holy things. Then he must needs fall back on the power of his will and go doggedly on. Asceticism is an incomparable discipline of the will. To refrain from eating when one is hungry, to keep awake when one would like to sleep, require more will-power than those who have not tried it can know. Other subtler forms of self-discipline, such as refraining from conversation about one's self and one's own opinions, pursuits and interests, and not feeling self-righteous when one has succeeded, may be recommended to those who believe that their wills are in no need of training.

The value of a will sharpened and tested like finest steel may not be obvious at the outset of the mystic's progress, when love and fervour carry him swiftly along the way, but in the later stages it is his one essential possession.

Classification of Spiritual Exercises.

Spiritual exercises may be roughly divided into two classes, the *intellectual* and the *hypnotic*.

The first is "discursive meditation," and the second contemplation proper. In an intellectual meditation the seeker after truth sets his mind to work on some holy

matter, and allows the light of reason to play upon it He strives to consider it in all its bearings, to understand its significance, to allow it to arouse his feelings of love and devotion. This meditation is essentially an active one, though it often awakens in the subconscious mind trains of thought and spontaneous ideas, which, when they emerge into consciousness, appear to the seer to be sent to him as messages from without, and of which he is the passive recipient. There is nothing mysterious about discursive meditation. Except that the object of thought is a sacred one, it differs in no way from the ordinary manner of giving an interesting matter one's best attention.

Perhaps for this very reason it is considered as being inferior to contemplation and to the class of spiritual exercises which I have called "hypnotic." "The squirrel-work of the industrious intellect" is somewhere contrasted by Miss Underhill with "the piercing vision of the desirous heart," and in this she is merely following the judgment of the best writers about the mystic way. It is an immediate apprehension of reality which the hypnotic meditation is designed to produce, and it has the advantage of offering direct access, so the mystics believe, to God. I fear, however, that the use of the word "hypnotic" may lay me open to misconstruction, and that the majority of the exercises of which I shall speak in this book will be dismissed as "nothing but forms of auto-hypnosis." What is hypnosis? In hypnosis the ordinary channels of sense-impression are closed, in order that the "subject" may be more accessible to certain suggestions from the operator. In contemplation the mystic cuts himself off from things of sense in order that he may receive communion from the divine. The hypnosis produced by certain religious practices differs from ordinary hypnosis in two important respects. First, the mystic is not under the control of some outside experimenter, as is the hypnotized "subject," but under the control of his own will and of the religious purpose of his whole life and

mentality. Second, the content of his consciousness is not the chance picture or illusion cast into it by his hypnotizer, but consists of some presentation of religious truth or of some message from God. The hypnotic consciousness of man would seem to be as varied as the normal consciousness, and, like it, may be worthless or sublime.

Elements of the Spiritual Exercise.

A spiritual exercise will probably contain the following parts:

1. A certain definite posture.[1]
2. The regulation of the breath. In Christian meditations the quieting of the emotions.
3. The banishing of intruding thoughts.
4. Concentration.
5. The repeating of a sacred sentence.

Let us now proceed to consider the various component parts of a spiritual exercise.

Posture.

Everyone who prays quite naturally adopts a fixed and definite asana, or posture. This posture was originally used to show reverence for the deity to whom worship was being performed. A quiet body produces a quiet mind, and the man who can remain for several hours in one attitude will also be able to concentrate his attention on a holy matter without his thoughts wandering. Also, a familiar posture tends to "recollection." The proof of this is a simple matter. Let anyone who reads this, if he is in the habit of saying his prayers night and morning, go and kneel quietly by his bedside for a few minutes. Let him think of nothing in particular, but just wait. In a short time the familiar attitude will have suggested prayer to him,

[1] The Hindu names for the parts of a spiritual exercise are as follows: (1) Āsana; (2) Prāṇāyāma; (3) Pratyāhāra; (4) Dhāraṇā; (5) Mantra.

and the words of a familiar petition will form themselves in his mind.

The posture of reverence differs in different religions, and in different sects within the same creed. In Christian churches prayer is offered kneeling, standing, sitting, and prostrated on the ground, sometimes in the form of a cross.[1] Hindus pray cross-legged, but eighty-one chief asanas (postures) are taught to the man who would attain Samadhi by meditation. Buddhist postures would seem to have been taken from Hinduism. Jews usually pray standing. Of the Mohammedan prayer attitude Professor Margoliouth writes:[2] "The supplicator should raise his hands to the level of his shoulders and turn the inside of them towards his face, kneel on his knees, fold his hands to his breast in the course of his prayer, at the end rub his face with his hands."

Appropriate gestures, particularly in discursive meditation, will accompany the posture. The Jew will raise his arms to heaven and invoke the blessing of Jehovah; the Christian will sign himself with the cross of Christ, or kiss the Bible open before him. In Hindu meditation the gesture, if any, will vary according to the mantra employed. For instance, "in doing recitation of the Shakti mantra, count is to be made on all the joints of the fingers, except in the two upper joints of the first finger."[3] In some meditations, as, for instance, the Buddhist candle prayer, posture and gesture are periodically changed at different stages of the exercise. A modern Hindu teacher, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, recommended that the repetition of "Hari Om" be accompanied by rhythmic clapping of the hands.

[1] Roughly speaking, the Catholic posture is kneeling; Continental Protestant, standing; Nonconformist, sitting; Greek Church, kneeling and prostrate.

[2] *Mohammedanism*, p. 122.

[3] *Principles of Tantra*, vol. i., p. xii. note. Translated by Arthur Avalon.

Regulation of the Breath.

Quiet, deep and regular breathing would seem to be necessary for meditation, and practice in this is enjoined before spiritual exercises be entered on. If the breath be under control, the emotions are supposed to be in a state of serenity.

The Hindus have developed a very complicated science of breath regulation, the exact importance of which is difficult to understand. Some of the exercises recommended would seem to be impossible, others dangerous or highly painful. The yogi who can control his vital air, or prana (life force) by means of pranayama is, moreover, promised magical powers of a very startling nature; indeed, some native books assert that the sage who can remain for twelve days without breathing becomes as mighty as a god. The power of falling into a self-induced trance by means of pranayama would certainly seem to be a not very rare achievement among the Hindu yogi, and there are cases on record when the trance was maintained for as long as forty days. The yogi Haridas, for instance, was buried alive, watch kept over his grave for forty days, and he was then exhumed and restored to life.[1] No information is to hand, however, of the religious experience which might have accompanied this prolonged suspension of animation, nor are we told how the yogi's sanctity was increased thereby.

In the West a trance brought on by semi-suffocation would be looked on with suspicion and thought to be very different from the holy trances of St. Teresa and other saints.

Moderate proficiency in the regulation of the breath is, however, admittedly useful, and the importance attached to it cannot be lightly dismissed. "Sufism," says one definition of Mohammedan mysticism, "*is* the regulation of the breath."

[1] J. C. Oman, *Cults, Customs, and Superstitions of India*, p. 16.

Behind all these practices and the science of breathing in non-Christian religions, there is some idea that the breath is in itself divine, and that through it the mystic gets in touch with the universal life and breath of the cosmos—that is, with God.

Banishing of Intruding Thoughts.

The importance of this needs hardly to be insisted on. Obviously the power of concentrating the attention is indispensable to the man who wishes to meditate. The first part of the process of banishing intruding thoughts consists in withdrawing the attention from external objects. The eyes are generally closed, but the mind must not be allowed to dwell on the visual images which persist. The sense of touch will, owing to the familiar posture adopted, not be intrusive, while the senses of taste and smell will probably be dormant, too. Only the sense of hearing seems to be abnormally active. Any movement in the church or cloister, the rustle of wind through the leaves of the tree under which the aspirant is meditating, the song of a bird, the sound of distant voices, suffice to distract the attention. Even when these are no longer noticed, the heart-beat within the body drones like a muffled drum, and every pulsation of the blood becomes audible. Notes of music heard long ago come singing through the brain, words and jests start up out of nowhere and mock the sage; even the devil himself seems to draw near and shout ribaldry in ringing tones. Of all the senses, that of hearing is the most difficult to control, and every saint has lamented the power that "distractions" have over his mind. It is very likely that the men whose temperament predisposes them to vivid religious experiences are naturally gifted with exceptionally good auditory imaginations, and even with subtler physical powers of hearing than ordinary mortals.

Concentration.

"Le meilleur moyen de déplacer," says the French proverb, "est de remplacer." The best way of banishing intruding thoughts is the concentration of the mind on some definite object.

In discursive meditation the attention will, of course, occupy itself with the picture, idea, passage of Scripture, etc., that has been chosen. Usually there is no need of an external object of concentration, such as a crucifix, or even of a visualized symbol, on which to focus the mind, and by whose means the right psychological state is induced. The mystic, closing his eyes and ears, and putting worldly considerations from his mind, will allow his thoughts to dwell lovingly on some scene from the life of Christ or Mahomet, Gotama or Vishnu. He will think of the attributes of God, of the work of divine grace in his soul, of Death and Judgment, the Garden and the Fire. The seven deadly sins will be considered by him, the four cardinal or the three theological virtues. Or he may meditate on the Noble Eightfold Path, the three Gems or Refuges, the five Skandhas, and all the number of the precepts of the followers in the way of Buddha.

Even in discursive meditation, however, the sight of a sacred object or symbol may be of use in stimulating the flow of thought. St. Teresa was accustomed to put a holy book before her, and claimed that the mere sight of it induced recollection. Many have been the saints who meditated before the images of Jesus or before pictures of His Sacred Heart. St. Ignatius Loyola prescribes gazing at a crucifix. Images of the deity or symbols of His nature are universally recommended as suitable objects on which to concentrate the attention.

Hypnotic meditation cannot well be undertaken without the use of some focus-point for the mind. The visualized picture of a symbol is usually held to be the most efficacious. The mystic should choose one par-

ticular symbol which represents as far as may be the aspect of religion which most appeals to him. The same symbol may, of course, yield different meaning to different individuals. Thus a cross within a circle may suggest sacrifice, life and immortality, the Incarnation, the union of divine and human consciousness, the merging of the self in the Absolute, etc. The seer must grow to love his symbol and to dwell on it in his mind until it becomes as much a part of his consciousness as his sense of his own individuality. Sometimes it will attend him in visual hallucination. A case has come under my own observation of a young man who meditated on the above-mentioned symbol and saw it blazoned before him in the air wherever he went, shining as with the glory of God.

The consciousness of the mystic has need of symbols, and it is in them that he often finds his apprehension of the truth. "The whole object of the mystic consciousness," says Récéjac in his acute but incomplete survey of the mystic's mind, *Essai sur les Fondements de la Connaissance Mystique*,[1] "is centred on forming symbols *of the utmost power of suggestion*, in order to make God known to the heart." "Symbols," he says again, "constitute an effort to conceive the Absolute in an adequate representation—not as adequate to the Absolute, which is unknowable, but as adequate to our own consciousness."[2]

The subconscious mind would seem to be profoundly affected by symbols. A symbol, when cast like a seed into its fertile soil, will often take root, and flower into strange buds of vision and audition, intuitions and apprehensions of reality. In dreams and religious experience in trance, symbolism plays a large part.[3]

[1] Trans. Sara Carr Upton, p. 47. [2] P. 125.
[3] For further treatment of the subject, see p. 190 below.

The Sacred Sentence.

Finally, the spiritual exercise contains the repetition or consideration of the sacred sentence.

In Hinduism a mantra[1] is given to the pupil at initiation. Wonderful and holy as is the sentence in itself, and endowed with intrinsic excellence, it yet is useless without worthy reception on the part of the chela. "The sacramental energy of the mantra, even when the guru has *vivified it with consciousness*, depends in part for its efficacy on the competence of him who receives it."[2]

Mantra is spoken of in the most glowing terms. "A mere collection of words is something gross, while mantra is full of consciousness. A word is a mere display of letters, whilst mantra is a mass of radiant energy."[3]

So keenly do the Hindus love their mantras that even the most ardent reformer cannot conceive of a religion without them. Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, for instance, while rejecting his sacred thread, yet in the Brahma-Samaj used the great Gayatri mantra for initiation and worship. He writes as follows:[4] "I drew up a declaration of faith for initiation into the Brahma-Dharma, which contained a clause to the effect that daily worship was to be performed by means of the Gayatri mantra. He who recites the Gayatri mantra, together with Om and vyahritis, with untiring perseverance for three years, he attains to Brahma.

"For the communion of the soul with God, words are a potent medium. If those words are time-honoured and well known and easy of utterance of comprehension, the worshipper benefits by them all the sooner. For generations we have been initiated in the Gayatri mantra. It runs in our blood. I continued to worship

[1] The word "mantra" here is not used in the popular sense of spell or charm sometimes given to it in India.

[2] Avalon, *op. cit.*, vol. i., p. lxxiii. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 141.

[4] *Autobiography*, pp. 27, 35.

Him daily by means of the Gayatri mantra, before touching any food. . . . And now I obtained this thing beyond all hope that He was not far from me, not only a silent witness, but that He dwelt within my soul and inspired all my thoughts."

In Buddhism we find the "mastery formulæ" used as mantras. In Sufism repetitions of the name of God are much used. So, too, the Jews reverently pronounce the sacred Tetragrammaton. In modern Baha'ism, I was interested to find that the Jew, Ibrahim George Kheiralla, teaches followers of the Persian prophet Baha'u'llah how to utter the most holy name of God.

Holy sentences, like symbols, get past the conscious into the subconscious mind; like symbols, they are full of pious associations, powerful, evocative. Round it, as time goes on, clusters the mystic's religious experience. The Hindu's initiation formula, the Christian's favourite text, can express the particular aspect of divine truth with which he has most affinity, and on which he may most profitably meditate.

CHAPTER I

THE RESULT OF SPIRITUAL EXERCISES[1]

THE mystic, when attempting to describe the results of his spiritual exercises, may do so in two ways: either he may tell of the stages of his spiritual growth, explaining his temptations, hopes and achievements at each step of the way, or he may give detailed descriptions of the experiences, such as visions, raptures, or more subtle communings with God which mark his progress. A good example of the first method is *The Parliament of Birds*, by Farid-uddin Attar. Here, under the form of a fanciful allegory, the seven stages of the Sufi are set forth, and there is described the final stage of beatitude when the soul knows not whether it is itself or God. Almost every writer on mysticism has divided the way into stages, sometimes making three divisions, or seven, or, like St. John of the Cross in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, as many as ten. St. Teresa's *Interior Castle* is a combination of the two methods, the description of the soul's progress being illustrated by pictures of its experiences.

One of the best accounts of the stages of psychological development is that given by Henri Delacroix in his *Études d'Histoire et de Psychologie du Mysticisme*. Though he holds that not divine influence, but the subconscious mind, operates on the "soul," yet he writes with much insight and understanding.

The general development of the mystic's character has not, however, spiritual exercises for its sole or even chief cause, being the result of his whole life and effort,

[1] Catholic writers would, of course, deny that the higher states of contemplation were the "results" of spiritual exercises. "Infused contemplation" is a free gift of God.

and of the influences under which he deliberately places himself. It will be more to our purpose, therefore, to study in detail his different types of consciousness and modes of apprehending the Absolute, which may be claimed as the direct outcome of his devotions.

Result of "Intellectual" Meditations.

The meditations which I have called intellectual should rouse the aspirant's feelings of love and devotion; arm him with resignation, courage and patience; brighten the sword of his intellect and make it keen to cleave truth and lies apart; set free the wings of his imagination to soar to lofty conceptions of holy things; fit him, in a word, to understand the nature of his own being and of God and of the relation between the two. It should not, however, change consciousness from normal into abnormal.

Point where Intellectual Meditation merges into Hypnotic.

Without a willed change in the object considered, an intellectual meditation will at a certain stage of the devotee's development naturally pass into a hypnotic one. An instance will explain what is meant. It is to be noted that the mystic is often bewildered and alarmed, as well as ravished and uplifted, by the change in the mode of his consciousness, and often reproves himself, or is chidden by his director, for what is a normal and possibly inevitable development.

The aspirant has set himself, let us suppose, a meditation on the Passion of Christ. Step by step he has followed his Lord to the cross, picturing before him in visual imagery each scene in the holy drama. He watches the Saviour nailed to the cross, hears and almost feels each blow, watches the sacred blood spurting from the hands, the pierced feet, adores the face so noble and meek in its agony. In imagination he stands among the crowd of men and women, hears some mock,

others weep. Even his consciousness seems to take some share in the convulsions of the elements.

> "I rend my clothing for the temple veil,
> My heart's black night must act the sun's eclipse,
> My groans must play the earthquake, till I quail
> At my own dark imagining."

Then other thoughts press in. The seer's mind catches hold of the idea of vicarious sacrifice, and he meditates long on the mystery of the Atonement. He sees it, not as a mechanical process, whereby an angry Deity may be appeased and turned from vengeance, but as a spiritual fact regenerating the human soul. While the considerations have occupied his mind, the picture has somewhat faded. Suddenly it is lighted up again, and he sees the three crosses reared black on the skyline of the skull-shaped hill. His attention fastens on the words of the dying Lord: "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." "With Me in Paradise." The mystic repeats these words over and over again. They have become the mantra, the sacred sentence, round which the whole of the experience groups itself. "With Me in Paradise." Where Christ is, comes the meaning, there is heaven indeed. "With Me in Paradise." The visual imagery has gone; the one thought, complex yet simple, persists — the mystic's soul, its nearness to Christ, the joy of this collocation. Here he has reached "the prayer of simplicity," or "the prayer of simple regard" as it is called.

Now may come the swift transition from meditation to contemplation. The busy mind has ceased running hither and thither after thoughts and pictures. The seer no longer wishes to reason and to reflect; indeed, he is unable. Should he strive to formulate special "acts," he will find, and sometimes with dismay, almost with terror, that he cannot do so. His attention has narrowed itself down to one single point—he passes through the strait gate, beyond which comes the tremendous expansion of consciousness which seems to dazzle him and

to transport him out of himself. Nothing remains to the mystic of the scenes and thoughts of the Crucifixion but the knowledge that he is in the presence of his Lord. And that presence, that reality, so near, so intimately felt, brings with it a rapture beyond joy, a knowledge beyond reason, a sensation more intense than that of life itself, infinite in peace, in harmony, in beauty. All his senses seem to have merged into one; he becomes, as it were, nothing but one supreme awareness of God, and in this rapture, this touching, tasting, beholding, he feels himself to cease to be, while convinced, when normal consciousness reasserts itself, that then and then only did he truly live.[1]

Difficulties of the Subject.

The task of the psychologist who would investigate the types of spiritual consciousness within the domain of even one religion is no easy one. Far harder is the work of comparison between experiences in several religions. Buddhist and Christian theologians are alone in having made clear and definite classifications of mystic states, though Hindus and Mohammedans recognize and name many types. In Judaism the classification is so fanciful and overlaid with allegory that any scientific treatment of the matter seems to be impossible.

It is tempting to try to identify types of mystical experience as found in different religions, but in the present very imperfect state of our knowledge of the subject this temptation must be avoided. There would seem, for instance, to be a great similarity between the Hindu "seedless Samadhi," the Buddhist "fourth aruppa," and the Mohammedan "fana," and it would be exceedingly convenient to class them as identical. This, however, would only lead to great confusion. The psychologist may, indeed, venture to compare visions of Gotama with visions of Christ, and perhaps to assert that the state of mind of a man who sees a deva is not

[1] This meditation is taken, with a few modifications, from my manuscript collection.

unlike the state of mind of a man who sees an angel. But there must be much painstaking investigation of Oriental psychology, and of the sense in which various technical terms are used, and also, here in the West, a more complete and sympathetic understanding of the nature of the mystic consciousness, before full comparison of the results of meditations in different religions can profitably be undertaken. It seems to me, too, that any hard-and-fast classification of mystic states must always be arbitrary, if not altogether hopeless.

Possibly some of the readers of this book may wish to practise spiritual exercises for themselves, either for scientific interest in the subject, or for edification. Apparently meditation, practised for scientific reasons in a cool and critical spirit, produces hardly any perceptible effect. At one time about a dozen persons here in Cambridge undertook, at my suggestion,[1] an experiment in spiritual exercises. Half of them did so with devotional intention, the others merely as students interested in types of human consciousness. In no case did the seekers after religious experience fail to attain their object, and the results of their meditations were most varied and interesting. (They appear, by the way, to have been unaware that the greatest of Christian mystics agree in saying that definite religious experience should not be *sought*, but only *accepted*, and not even then uncritically.) The scientific experimenters were, with one exception, disappointed. Even the junior demonstrator in Psychology, who devoted much time and patience to his practice, and who kept an exact record of results, had nothing to note beyond certain unimportant kinæsthetic sensations, and a certain sense of mental quiet, such as might have been induced by looking peacefully at a field or a blank sheet of paper or no matter what.

The case of the man who, without religious intention, had interesting results is worthy of notice. The exercise given was the "hypnotic circles" of the Buddhists.

[1] I should not now make such a suggestion.

While concentrating his attention on these circles the student found passing in front of his eyes a series of symbolic pictures, much like those in the Books of Daniel and Revelation. These images became so vivid that they amounted at times to visual hallucination. The experimenter professed to be much amused and not at all impressed by the result of his meditations. I could not, however, refrain from thinking that, since he was of Jewish origin, there remained in his subconscious mind that passionate interest in religion which persists even in the least orthodox or believing of Jews. The visual imagery, be it also noted, was Jewish rather than Buddhist, and was obviously determined by the student's mentality, and by his familiarity with Jewish symbols, rather than by the associations connected with Buddhist circles. In this, as in the other class of experiments mentioned above, the tendency of the subconscious mind to think in symbolic pictures, more naturally than in words, is clearly brought out.

Altogether the experiments, though so few in number, justify me, I think, in laying down as an axiom that *religious intention is essential to the successful performance of a spiritual exercise.*

CHAPTER II

HINDU MEDITATIONS

Reasons for placing Hinduism first in treating of non-Christian Systems of Meditations.

In treating of meditations, I take Hinduism first because it had an elaborately worked-out science of yoga before any of the other higher religions, with the exception of Judaism, had come into existence at all. A thousand years before the Christian Era there were in India "forest universities," as the modern Hindu loves to call them, where ascetics who had renounced the world taught their followers how to control their minds, develop their consciousness, and merge their own egos in the great Spirit or Self of the Universe. The tradition has been carried on unbroken to the present day.

Buddhist meditations are chiefly developments of Hindu originals.[1] Some authorities hold that the exercises of the Sufi were taken over from the Vedanta, though Professor E. G. Browne and others believe that Sufism is more indebted to Neo-Platonism.

It is possible to defend the theory that Alexandrine Neo-Platonism was itself influenced by Hinduism. Jewish mysticism, and in a lesser degree Chris-

[1] As Dr. E. J. Thomas in his *Life of Buddha*, pp. 154, 155, writes: "It is usually held that the (Buddhist) practice of concentration is borrowed from the methods of the Yogi philosophy. This is probable, but little direct evidence is available. We find it assumed in Buddhist works that the practice of concentration was not original in Buddhism. What was original was the method—*right* concentration."

tianity, may have learnt, too, from the wisdom of India.[1]

This action and interaction between the East and the West has taken place at various times during history, and never more noticeably than at the present day.

Origins of Hinduism.

The origins of Hinduism are such as would naturally predispose the seeker to aspire to communion with the spiritual reality believed to be behind Nature. The ancient Aryan, who felt himself as much a part of Nature as the lofty mountains and wide-stretching jungles which filled his heart with awe, formed instinctively the idea of spirit in everything, spirit at the same time many and one. This was Animism, the vague instinctive belief which drifts easily into Polytheism on the one hand and Pantheism on the other.

In the course of centuries this primitive belief developed and took many forms, varying with locality and class. One may for convenience divide Hindu religious history into four periods—the Vedic, the Brahmanic, the period of the Upanishads, and that of the Vedanta—but such classification is of little help towards realizing the prevailing attitude of the people towards their gods and their means of worship. Hinduism as we have it to-day is not one religion, but many. The modern Hindu may believe in one God, in a thousand gods, in no gods at all; he may hold that he has a soul which has climbed upwards since the birth of time, that it will always have an individual existence, that it will ultimately be absorbed in the Absolute, or that he has no soul at all. So long as he does not deny the sanctity of the Vedas, and faithfully performs certain ceremonies, chief among them being the sraddha, or funeral rite of his father, he may pass as an orthodox Hindu.

[1] The influence of Neo-Platonism on Christian Mysticism, through "Dionysius the Areopagite," is too well known to need insisting on here.

The widest diversity of belief is found even among ascetics leading outwardly similar lives. It is said that at the monastery presided over by Swami Vivekananda were found recluses of every type of belief, from the most rigid monotheism to atheism tempered with hero-worship. Particular types of consciousness rather than certainty in dogmatic belief are looked on as constituting attainment in religion.

Hindu Sects.

Hindus at the present day may be roughly divided into—

1. *Saivas* (worshippers of Siva).
2. *Vaishnavas* (worshippers of Vishnu, and particularly of his manifestation in Sri Krishna).
3. *Sikhs* (followers of Guru Nanak; monotheists. Nanak, as is well known, wished to reconcile Hinduism and Mohammedanism, and only succeeded in founding a new religion. The chief form of Sikh temple worship consists in reverence paid to the sacred book. I have no record of meditations practised by Sikhs, and consequently none of the following remarks must be taken as applying to them).
4. *Saktas* (worshippers of Sakti or Shakti, the female energy of the deity, under the form of the goddesses Devi, Durga, and Kali).

The yogis, of whose practices some account is given in the following pages, may usually be classed as Saivas, since Siva was the lord and inventor of the science of yoga, but they are not uniformly so.

Educated Hindus of the present day are apt to believe that the various deities of their Pantheon correspond to different conceptions of Brahman, and have no separate existence. Yoga meditation, too, will add the feeling that the individual soul has no existence of its own, but is a drop in the divine ocean, and will be inevitably recognized as such when the transient and

illusory nature of matter and thought, the "maia" and "play" of God is understood.[1]

Yoga.

Orthodox Hinduism expects that every man should, at the close of his life, practise those spiritual exercises which alone will teach him to understand the truth about the universe and his own nature. As a boy he should be sent away from his parents to the care of some religious teacher, whom he must serve with tireless devotion. At the age of twenty he should return to the world, marry and assume the duties of a householder. When his children are grown up and his work is over, he is to give himself up to religious thought. Finally, with his mind free from all attachments and hindrances, from possessions and from love, he is to wander away into the jungle and, as a homeless ascetic, taste the freedom that comes from perfect renunciation.

Even now it causes little surprise when a busy Westernized Hindu casts away his European thoughts and clothes, gives up his position and family, and goes away alone into the forest. Such a one was Tilleinathan Swami, a wealthy shipowner. For five years, from 1850 to 1855, he practised yoga. Then, becoming "emancipated," he wound up his affairs, and, in spite of the entreaties of his wife and friends, went away naked into the woods.

A few years ago, too, a prosperous Calcutta merchant was sitting at his window enjoying the cool evening air when a musician came into the courtyard and began to sing.

"It is growing late—it is growing late," sang the minstrel.

"Yes," said the merchant to himself, "it is growing late, and my life is already far advanced. I should seek the union of my soul with God."

[1] Of the different Monist and Dualist schools of philosophy it is not possible to speak here.

Calling the male members of his household together, he disposed of his property and made known his intention of taking up a religious life. From that day forward he was lost to his family, though a report came to them that he had been seen in a spot high up among the hills, where, seated cross-legged on the ground, he was engaged in meditation, his unseeing gaze fixed on the sacred Himalayas' far-off snows.

Hindu Conception of Man's Nature.

Before speaking of the different kinds of yoga, or ways of union with the Atman, the Hindu idea of the nature of man must be explained. He is generally thought of as being composed of the following elements:

1. *Atman* (Spirit).—This is changeless and without attributes, and may be said to constitute the only absolute reality in his nature. The other parts of him are "veils," to be successively cast off.

2. *Buddhi* (Spiritual Mind), perhaps better described as "soul," the higher part of personality. From it proceed inspiration, both religious and artistic, visions, etc.

3. *Higher Manas* (Mind)—*i.e.*, intelligence and reason. Intuition originates in the Buddhi, but ordinary intelligent thought in the manas.

4. *Lower Manas* (Animal Mind).—This is the subconscious mind that directs the operations of the body. Be it noted that the activities of the Buddhi are also largely subconscious.

5. *Prana* (Life Force), sometimes conceived of as breath, sometimes as a fluid, sometimes as a magnetic force.

6. *Linga Sharira* (Fine Body).—The fine body is supposed to delight in violent emotions, whether of joy, passion, or what not.

7. *Sthula Sharira* (Gross Body).—The material body as usually understood.

Nerve Centres.

The body is supposed to have seven chakkras, or wheels, which were once spoken of as lotuses, and now as nerve centres. Originally they were understood to be purely symbolic, but must have come in course of time to be looked on as real. One modern seeker after truth cut up a corpse to find the chakkras, and, on failing to discover their existence, judged that the system of the yogis must be nonsense.

The chakkras are as follows:

1. *Sahasrara.*—(Placed above the head. Said to have a thousand petals.)
2. *Ajna* (Pineal gland).
3. *Visuddhi* (Larynx).
4. *Anahata* (Heart).
5. *Manipura* (Solar plexus, stomach).
6. *Svadhisthana* (Genital organs).
7. *Muladhara* (Navel).

Kundalini.

There is also a "coiled-up one," Kundalini, ignorantly believed by some to be an actual serpent, lying dormant at the base of the spine. The Kundalini symbolizes mystic illumination. When she is asleep, the devotee's mind is in an unawakened condition. When she has darted upwards and reached the Sahasrara chakkra, "there to take her pleasure with the Lord of all," the seer has reached the full expansion of his consciousness and has merged it in the Divine. "Kundalini" is often used, however, to express in a fanciful manner the "libido" of the psycho-analyst. The ancient Hindu forestalling of modern conceptions is most striking.

The Three Gunas.

Man is also dominated by three properties, or gunas.[1]

1. *Sattva* (Serenity; wholly good).
2. *Rajas* (Activity; may be good or bad).
3. *Tamas* (Inertness; bad).

Sattva is the serenity of the spirit; *rajas* the dominating, restless activity, property of the mind; *tamas* the grossness of the material body. Their symbols are mercury, sulphur, and salt.

Positive and Negative.

Man is further classed as positive or negative, according as sun or moon have influence over him. Generally speaking, women are said to be negative and men positive. The photisms which may accompany meditation are sometimes said to be related to the influence of the sun and moon over the body. Certain meditations, too, may only be undertaken at certain positions of the waxing or waning moon. A Hindu in this country, who has been successful in his treatment of soldiers suffering from shell-shock, and whose system was yoga practically applied, was very particular about the influence of the moon, and considered that if his patients went against its mysterious power they would do themselves harm instead of good. I have, however, not been able to ascertain with any degree of exactness the theories which prompt these rules, nor can I discover what is the connection supposed to exist between the sun and moon and the subjective light visible in ecstasy.

[1] Professor J. H. Woods, in his Preface to *The Yoga System of Patanjali*, p. x., writes of this difficult word: "I prefer to translate it by 'aspect' rather than by 'constituent,' because, in addition to the meanings 'quality' and 'substance,' it often seems to have the semantic value of 'subordinate,' as correlated to 'pradhāna.' Three other words, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* seem untranslatable, unless one is content with half meaningless etymological parallels."

It seems to me, however, that "property" gives the best meaning for "guna."

The impossibility of disentangling what is obviously symbolic from what is held to be actual, is one of the greatest difficulties which confronts the student of Eastern meditations. For instance, the symbolism of the four elements, earth, air, fire and water, is sometimes used by the Hindus (in the Buddhist manner) to describe the composition of man. "The true quality of the soul is that of *space*, by which it is at rest everywhere," said Ramaswamy, handing on the traditional teaching. "Then comes the *air* quality, by which it moves with speed from place to place; then the *fire* quality, by which it discriminates; then the *water* quality, which gives it emotional flow; and then the *earth* or self quality, rigid and unyielding."[1]

This appears to be a mixture of symbolism and of half-serious philosophy similar to the one with which Heraclitus has made us familiar.

Classification of Yoga.

Yoga is variously classified. A large number of authorities recognize only two kinds—Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga. Max Müller, and, following him, J. Campbell Oman, give four kinds:

Mantra Yoga (Repetition of sacred sentence).
Laya Yoga (Concentration).
Raja Yoga (Regulating the breath).
Hatha Yoga (Physical exercises).[2]

R. W. Frazer identified Hatha Yoga and Krija Yoga, and calls them "lower teaching," and speaks of Raja Yoga as the "final teaching."

Keshab Chandra Sen, the well-known modern prophet, divided his disciples into (1) *Yogi* (adepts in rapt communion), (2) *Bhakta* (adepts in rapturous love),

[1] Edward Carpenter, *From Adam's Peak to Elephanta*, pp. 189, 190 (1910 ed.).

[2] F. Max Müller, *Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings*, p. 8; J. C. Oman, *Mystics, Ascetics, and Saints of India*, p. 172.

(3) *Jnani* (earnest seekers after truth), and (4) *Shebak* (active servants of humanity), and gave instruction suited to each of these four classes.[1]

The best classification of the different kinds of yoga would seem, however, to be:[2]

1. *Kriya Yoga* (preparatory exercises).
2. *Bhakti Yoga* (union by love).
3. *Karma Yoga* (union by work).
4. *Jnana Yoga* (union by knowledge).
5. *Hatha Yoga* (union by physical training).
6. *Raja (royal) Yoga* (union by will).

A true yogi, whether Bhakta, Jnani, or whatever he may be, should practise each kind of yoga in some degree, though devotion or intellectual meditation may preponderate. It will be the duty of the teacher to point out to his pupil which path is best suited to his particular temperament.

The Guru.

Mention has been made before of the importance of the teacher. How, then, is the guru to be chosen? "You may choose him," said a Brahman to me, "for his reputation for spirituality. He may be a wandering monk, a priest, a hermit, a king, a university professor. He may be a Sudra or a Brahman. If a man has 'attained,' pupils will come to him quite naturally."

First of all, the teacher will plumb the depths of his pupil's mind. It is said of the famous modern teacher, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa: "He would sometimes put his chelas with a touch into a form of deep trance, and in that state the mind would speak of itself, as was the case with advanced disciples, or he would ask certain questions and it would respond."[3]

[1] *Indian Thought*, p. 134.

[2] This classification is connected with Vedanta.

[3] *The Life of Swâmi Vivekânanda*, by his Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 295.

A thorough investigation of the pupil's mind is necessary before the routine of his life and the proper meditations suited to his character can be arranged.

Initiation.

Some ceremony of initiation will be performed.

"Brahmans at sannyasi initiation," said the same Brahman to me, "perform their own funeral rites, with the help of five gurus. One hands the thread, another the sacred tuft of hair to be burnt. A third gives the begging-bowl, a fourth the robe, the fifth a new name."

Such funeral rites symbolize, of course, the death of the old personality, and the birth of a new regenerated and sanctified being, freed from the worldly interest of the "old man."

While burning of incense, purification in various forms, etc., may enter into the ceremony, the giving of the mantra, or sacred sentence, is looked on as the most important part of initiation, particularly where the pupil is not becoming a wandering beggar, and no bowl or sannyasi's robes are needed.

"Does the chela choose the mantra himself? Does he keep the same one all his life?" I asked.

"Of course you keep the same one all your life," my informant told me, "and you choose it yourself by your own need, just as the patient chooses the medicine by his own need, though it is the physician who, because of his superior wisdom, prescribes it."

Women may act as gurus. Indeed, an initiation given by a mother to her son is said to be eight times as efficacious as any other.

Gurus are very generally worshipped as divine. One modern teacher, Narayan Seshasdir, is said to have boasted before an English audience that he had claimed and received divine honours. Keshab Chandra Sen claimed that he was the Centre of the Third Dispensation, even as Christ was the Centre of His. Narayena Agnihotri of the Deva-Samaj took the title of "Sattya Deva" ("Real God"), and said he was free from sin.

Photographs of the guru are very generally used nowadays in meditation to replace the "image in the heart" on which the devotee used to be asked to concentrate his attention.

Even where the guru is not held to be divine, his "spiritual parentage" is felt to be a far more real thing than any earthly tie, and he is loved above wife or child or mother. He is to be served with utter devotion and adored with extravagant veneration.

Edward Carpenter, in his book *From Adam's Peak to Elephanta*, gives an interesting account of his meeting with the guru Ramaswamy Illákanam. This yogi had given up three years to the practice of spiritual exercises. A year and a half was spent in complete silence. He remained most of the time in fixed attitudes of meditation, and experienced Samadhi, or superconsciousness. When he needed food or water, he would clap his hands, and his devoted wife would bring him whatever he might require. Even after the termination of the yoga period, Ramaswamy would spend most of his time in contemplation, and took so little food that it seemed as if he, like so many saints of East and West, had access to some interior source of nourishment. Sometimes at night he would wander about the woods, wrapt in meditation, and the wild beast which he met did him no harm.[1] Generally he appeared unconscious of events around him, so absorbed was he in the joy of contemplation; but he was always ready to instruct anyone who came to him for advice, and could act with great vigour and decision when necessary. His comments on the materialistic English, and on their sad plight without spiritual exercises, are amusing and worth quoting.[2]

"You in the West say 'O God, O God!' but you have no *definite* knowledge or methods whereby you can attain to see God. It is like a man who knows that there is *ghee* to be got out of a cow ['*pasu*' metaphorical for soul]. He walks round and round the cow

[1] See pp. 111, 146, 195 on Magical Powers. [2] P. 199.

and cries, '*O ghee! O ghee!*' Milk pervades the cow, but he cannot find it. Then when he has learned to handle the teat, and has obtained the milk, still he cannot find the ghee. It pervades the milk, and has yet to be got by a definite method. So there is a definite method by which the divine consciousness can be educed from the soul, but it is only in India that complete instruction exists on this point—by which a man who is 'ripe' may systematically and without fail attain the object of his research."

This method of cultivating superconsciousness is, of course, that system of spiritual exercises known as yoga.

Bhakti Yoga.

We will now proceed to consider in turn the different kinds of yoga, beginning with Bhakti yoga, the path of rapturous devotion.

In the life of a Bhakta, or one who seeks illumination by love of a particular deity or aspect of the deity, emotional worship should play the greatest part, though many of the exercises undertaken will be identical with those of a Raja yogi. The Swâtmârâm Swâmi[1] tells how a Bhakta should spend his time.

"Hearing histories of the god and relating them, remembering him, worshipping his feet, offering flowers to him, bowing to him in soul, behaving as his servant, becoming his companion, and offering one's Âtma to him. Bhakti . . . is an unbroken stream of love towards the feet of the Lord, a love that is the end all and be all of a person's existence, and during which he is as it were absorbed in the object of his devotion."

The famous Vaishnava prophet, Chaitanya, is one of the best examples of the Bhakta. The radiant adoration which he bestowed on Vishnu shines still in his followers to-day. The chanting of the one hundred and eight names of the god—sankîrtana (the singing in chorus to instrumental accompaniment)—and the nagara-

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 105-6.

kīrtana, or "town praise" (processions with singing and dancing), are among the means still used to stimulate love and worship.

Dr. Underwood[1] says: "Long before the Salvation Army had developed its characteristic methods, Chaitanya had employed in Bengal and Orissa enthusiastic singing in chorus as a prime means of propagating his gospel of devotion to Krishna. His methods were essentially those of the revivalist. . . . He won men by a tempest of emotional and devotional praise. The sankirtan was the all-powerful instrument. . . . It is difficult for a Westerner who has never been to India to form an accurate idea of a sankirtan or to estimate its effects on those who take part in it. He needs to see one, either among the Vaishnavas themselves, or among the Christians, for the sankirtan has passed into the Christianity of Bengal. . . . It was a frequent thing during this enthusiastic singing in chorus for the singers to exhibit many external signs of deep emotion. Some would swoon away in rapture and roll on the ground; others would embrace one another and laugh and cry alternately. The sky was made to resound with cries of 'Hari,' 'Haribole.' As the tide of feeling rose higher, the singers, in the contagion of their joy and rapture, would imagine that Krishna himself was with them, and all would become 'immersed in a sea of divine bhakta.'"

In spite of the exaggeration to which it sometimes leads, Bhakti yoga is the most natural way to union with the Divine, especially for women. Practically all the Christian saints have been inspired by love to perform their meditations, and have sought by adoration to find God. Many of the mystics, however, have been distrustful of the emotional element in religion, and have looked on the path of union by love (Bhakti yoga), as well as the paths of union by action and by thought (Karma and Jnana yoga) as apt to lead the seeker astray. In the West, as in the East, Raja yoga

[1] *Conversion: Christian and Non-Christian,* p. 206.

(union by *will*) is considered to be the noblest as well as the most difficult of all the ways to God.

Karma Yoga.

The Karma yogi is the man who has consecrated his daily life to the service of God, and who finds the Deity by the path of action. Not only the philanthropist or the statesman may be Karma yogi, but the hewers of wood and drawers of water may share, too, in the honour of attainment. Also, the ordinary duties of life are held, even in the so-called "dreamy East," to be better fulfilled by the dedicated than by the undedicated man. Thus a butcher showed Swâmi Vivekânanda his knife, and asserted that, because he had dismembered dead animals to the glory of God, his instrument had lasted him sixteen years, whereas, when he worked for his own advantage, the knife-edge turned blunt after a few weeks. It is possible to sympathize with his point of view without fully believing his statement. Compare, too, the simple-minded Brother Lawrence, author of *The Practice of the Presence of God*, and a Christian Karma yogi, who claimed that he had been much helped by his religious experiences to choose good wine for the monastery.

The true Karma yogi, however, is not one who looks to God or religion to help him to right actions, but who believes in action as the surest means of self-forgetfulness and of merging his consciousness in that of the Atman, or soul of the world. He moves about his duties, not as an isolated individual occupied in doing good or in being good, but as a part of a cosmic whole, as a recurring note in a universal symphony.

Jnana Yoga.

The Jnani is the philosopher, the man who has come by way of the travail of the intellect to understand that he is one with the Absolute. Professor McTaggart, for instance, having by thinking discovered that he was a

fundamental differentiation of the Hegelian Absolute, was a Jnani, and might very well have been a follower of Kapila or a holder of the Sankya philosophy. Such men, whether in the East or the West, will always be rare. Not for them the ardours of the disciples' love, not for them the living joys of hours spent in the presence of God, but theirs are the cold heights of intellectual speculation, the rarefied air of thought at its most pure.

In India the Jnani is looked on with much reverence. He is generally well read in the sacred books, and sanctified by the knowledge of many of the holy names of God. He knows Sanscrit, the language of the gods. As an inheritor of great traditions, as a figure that seems to have come straight from the divine past and to have no share in the frivolities of the present wicked Kali Yuga, he is worthy of boundless veneration. Originality of thought is the last thing that is expected of him. The Hindu philosopher, as the Hindu guru, is not called on to think for himself, but to hand on a great tradition intact.

Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga.

Hatha yoga is the physical training designed to give that command over the body which is an indispensable preliminary to Raja yoga. Its stern discipline can hardly be practised by men and women living in the world. To be a true Raja yogi you must leave your family and your business, seek out a teacher, and go away into the jungle or some secluded spot, there to give yourself up, body and soul, to working for "attainment." The training is likely to be long and arduous. Months and even years may pass before the chela, or pupil, sees any meaning in the curious duties that he is asked to perform; longer still before any spiritual light begins to dawn in his soul.

In order that the seeker may have the best possible chance of speedy attainment, the place where he lives

should be carefully chosen. He should reside, says the Hatha-Yoga Pradipika,[1] "in a small monastery situated in a place free from rocks, water [dampness] and fire [earthquakes], of the extent of a bow's length, and in a fertile country ruled over by a virtuous king, where he will not be disturbed. The Matha should have a very small door and should be without any windows. It should be neither too high nor too long. It should be very clean, being daily smeared over with cow-dung, and should be free from insects. Outside it should have a small corridor with a raised seat and a well, and the whole should be surrounded by a wall. . . . It should be surrounded by flower gardens and groves so that the eye of the Yogin resting upon them might become calm."

Daily Life of the Yogi.[2]

This is the daily life that the yogi is expected to lead:

"He should get up at 4 or 6 o'clock in the morning. Having contemplated upon his Guru in his mind and his duty in his heart, he should clean his teeth and besmear himself with holy ashes. Seated on a soft and convenient spot in a pleasant Matha, he should salute mentally his Guru. Then he should perform Sankalpa" (a rite of dedication) "thus: 'In the second half of the life of Adi Brahman . . . etc. (giving date), when the yogas are all very propitious, by the command of the Lord, for attaining Samadhi and its results, I begin to perform Asana, Pranayama, etc.'"

After practising asanas, and having sipped water while pronouncing some mantra, he should salute the great yogis. Pranayamas follow, and more asanas. In the lotus posture he should practise concentration on the inner sounds. In the end he should offer up all these labours to Iswara (the personal aspect of the Deity). Before dressing himself in the few clothes he possesses, he should bathe in hot water. The daily

[1] Pp. 5, 6. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 38.

duties must be performed very quickly. At midday he is allowed to rest and eat. Then he is told to take cloves, camphor, or betel-leaf without lime, and study the Shastras or repeat the names of God. He is to practise postures or breath cycles an hour and a half before sunset and again at midnight.

Asanas.

The student will not find any lack of variety in the number of prayer postures which he must learn to assume. The mastery of eighty-four chief postures is the minimum necessary to a yogi, and he has a choice of many more. A number of these attitudes are impossible to the average European; nor can it be very easy even for the more supple Hindu to sit, as I have seen modern yogi photographed sitting, cross-legged on the ground, with the right foot placed on the left thigh, and the left foot on the right—this being a comparatively simple posture.

The asanas have often fanciful names, such as the "lotus posture" or the "fowl posture." One of the easiest for a European is the "god posture." In this asana you merely sit erect with eyes closed, placing the hands, palms downwards, just above the knees. Each chela should choose one asana as particularly suited to himself and his mantra. He will find when he adopts it that it connects naturally with the words of his sacred sentence, and induces a right feeling of "recollection." By practice this asana will become to him the most comfortable position for his body. As one guru said to me: "You get into your asana as a tired man gets into his hot bath."

Purification.

The purification of the body is also an important part of the training of the yogi. Two of the commonest practices of purification are neti karm and dhoti karm. The first consists in drawing a thread through the

mouth and each nostril in turn, in order to cleanse the nasal fossæ. For the second, the yogi swallows a long strip of cloth or muslin, and, after it has reached the stomach, draws it out again.

The command which many of these men have over their body is very astonishing, for they seem to be able to regulate their heart-beats and give various orders to their internal organs in a manner which is quite unknown in the West. "I can do anything with my body — anything!" exclaimed Swâmi Vivekânanda triumphantly.

Pranayama.

While practising the various asanas, or postures, the pupil will at the same time exercise himself in pranayama, or control of the breath. This is supposed to be as good for the health as it is for the soul, and many a young Indian at an English University who has freed himself from what he considers the superstitions of his upbringing will yet be unable to touch his breakfast until he has performed a number of pranayama "cycles" at an open window.

Before beginning his breathing exercises, the chela will be instructed by his guru thus: ida, or ila, is the left nostril, pingala the right. Susumna is part of the spinal column, which is closed in the ordinary man, but which the yogi gradually opens by means of pranayama, in order that the Kundalini (the "coiled-up one," variously explained by modern Hindus as the personal life-force, personality, soul, etc.) may pass up to the Sahasrara chakkra (the lotus of a thousand and one petals, situated above the head). That is to say, the sensation may be produced by means of pranayama of the individual consciousness soaring aloft and finally becoming merged in the Universal Consciousness, or Formless Brahman.

Puraka is the inhalation of air, kumbhaka the retention, rechaka the expiration.

The first exercises are simple.

Inhale for twenty seconds, retain the breath for ten, exhale for twenty. Close the left nostril with the finger, inhale through the right, retain, exhale through the left.

Gradually the exercises increase in complexity until the student reaches that marvellous degree of breath control which is the mark of the true yogi.

Raja Yoga.

It is not altogether easy to mark off Raja yoga from the other forms of yoga, and especially to say where Hatha yoga ends and Raja yoga begins. The practice of regulating the breath, for instance, which may seem a mere physical exercise, if performed with the intention of dedicating the will to Brahman, and accompanied by appropriate meditations, counts as a spiritual exercise of a high order, while many of the meditations which are hereinafter to be set forth are also appropriate to Bhakti yoga and calculated to stimulate feelings of rapturous devotion. The essence of Raja yoga, however, is the emphasis laid on the *will;* the will must dominate the body and the mind, and then become identified with the divine will or the only real purpose and meaning of the universe. Such Western mystics as St. John of the Cross, who prized the subjection of the human will to the will of God far beyond any feeling of fervour or love, would be classed in India as Raja yogi.

I wish to make it clear that a Raja yogi is not distinguished from other yogi by any special way of life or set of practices, but by his scale of "values." And while the Jnani or philosopher, for instance, will not be true to the path he has chosen if he is also something of a Bhakta, and allows the serenity of his mind to be disturbed by religious emotions, the Raja yogi, so long as his will retains the mastery, may give himself to philosophic speculation as to the ardours of the devotee in love with his God.

To return to the exercises of the yogi.

Mantra.

The most vital of all the practices of the yogi is the repetition of the mantra, or sacred sentence. Generally the particular mantra most suited to the chela's capacity is given to him by his guru at initiation, but he may receive it in a vision, or he may in some cases change from one mantra to another as he progresses in wisdom. The most famous mantras are of unknown antiquity and are said to acquire virtue and power from the successive yogis who have used them. Each is a microcosm of some reality; the more it is made the subject of meditation, the more it discloses its wonders to the devotee. It must be repeated until it has passed from the conscious to the subconscious mind, and its rhythm sings in the brain even during sleep.

The most famous mantras are:

Aum (the hidden name of the Deity).—In pronouncing *Aum*, the breath should make its complete course—*i.e.*, inhalation, retention, and expiration.

Aum tat sat Aum (*Aum* that which is *Aum*).

Aum Shivaya vashi (An invocation used by the devotees of Siva).

And the *Gayatri mantra.*[1]

The pious Hindu of to-day still regards the mantra with the deepest veneration and believes in its efficacy for the spiritual life. As a Brahman said to me, "The mantra is the particular aspect of the universe that you are specially to contemplate. In use it is the means whereby you polarize your mind in the right direction. It is the thread whereon you hang the gems of all your most sacred experiences, so that the older you get, the more it means to you." Even busy people like himself, he told me, practised mantrayoga for half an hour morning and evening.

Meditation on the Tattwas.

The yogi, for strengthening his powers of concentration, should meditate on the tattwas, or principles

[1] *Cf.* Arthur Avalon, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 137 note.

(elements) by visualizing the symbol as clearly as possible and firmly practising pratyahara, the banishing of intruding thoughts. In time the subconscious mind will learn to eject the thoughts even before they arise into consciousness, and by the "death of the birth-strangled babes," as they are fancifully called, the picture of the symbol hangs vivid and unspoilt before the eye of the mind.

The tattwas are:

1. Yellow Square.—*Prithivi* (matter or earth).
2. Silver Crescent.—*Apas* (water).
3. Red Triangle.—*Agni* or *Tejas* (fire).
4. Blue Circle.—*Vayu* (air).

To these may be added *Akasa*, the black egg-spirit, which is also a favourite subject of meditation.

People who have tried these exercises in concentration give amusing accounts of how the symbols behave when once the attempt is made to concentrate attention on them. The yellow square, perhaps, will turn into a diamond, emit light, change colour; the crescent bring the tips of its horns together, or elongate itself and wriggle like an eel; the red triangle reel like a ship at sea; and the blue circle rise up into the air and vanish. The utmost patience and months of practice are needed before these elusive symbols are tamed and the mind has acquired the power of visualizing them clearly, at rest, and in their entirety.

The exercise is in any case a very fatiguing one, and to spend too long at a time over it may injure the brain.

Listening Exercise.

Again, the chela is taught to listen to the sounds in his own ears. The guru, when told what were the noises heard, is said to be able to tell what degree of spirituality the pupil has reached.

One of the explanations of this curious exercise is as

follows.[1] I take it from Dr. Farquhar's account of the Radha Soami faith, but there is no reason for thinking that the opinions are peculiar to that sect.

"Sabd[2] (Word, internal voice) is the spirit or life-current which has originally emanated from the Supreme Being, and is the means, not only of concentrating the will, but also of raising the spirit to the source from which it emanated. . . . The method for taking back the spirit to its Supreme Source is, first, to concentrate at the focus of the eyes the spirit and mind which are diffused in our body, and in a manner tied to external objects by desires and passions; the next, to commence its journey homewards by attending to the internal sound, or, in other words, by riding the life- or sound-current which has originally emanated from the Supreme Source."

The sounds which may be heard are said to be these:

First Stage.—Like the oceans, the clouds, the kettle-drum, the drum-cymbal.

Second Stage.—The conch, the bell, and the horn.

Third Stage.—Tinkling bells, flutes, the lute, bees.

These are called the voice of the Nada; and the yogi, instead of consulting an aurist, as his prosaic European brother would do if he heard such sounds, rejoices exceedingly.

Meditation on Dreams.

The seeker will often have dreams of ecstasy. He is bidden to meditate on these, and to extract the utmost possible profit from the events or symbols of the dream. It is probable, too, that he is taught to meditate on waking ecstasies, as the Buddhist is, but I have come across no particular injunction to this effect.

Forms of God.

The chela should also contemplate the forms of God, thinking of the one formless Brahman under his different

[1] J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 160.

[2] Sabdha = sound.

aspects, as Siva, Vishnu, Kali, etc. Or thus:[1] "In the morning she is Gâyatrî, and appears as a maiden, rosy like the young sun. At noon she is Sâvitrî, and appears as a young woman, dark as the petals of the blue lotus. In the evening she is Sarasvatî, and appears as an older woman of spotless white beauty."

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, when meditating on the forms of God, extended his conceptions far beyond the confines of Hinduism, and worshipped Mohammed, and Christian conceptions of God. "He had seen Jesus in a vision," Max Müller writes,[2] "and for three days could think and speak of nothing but Jesus and His love. There was this peculiarity in all his visions—that he always saw them outside himself, but when they vanished they seemed to have entered into him."

When practising the Vaishnava ideal of God, Ramakrishna dressed himself in women's garments, and at last fell into a trance, in which he saw Krishna, his beloved, standing before him.

The particular result of these meditations is that all religions are seen to be merely different ways of arriving at the One. As a modern Hindu said to me: "Just as Siva, Vishnu and Kali have no separate existence, but are aspects of the One, so are all religions aspects of the truth. Rites and ceremonies are for the simple, and these must differ, but the Hindus never persecute, for they know that truth is one."

Other Meditations.

The range of other meditations is a wide one. I select a few.[3]

"Take some holy person, some saint whom you know to be perfectly non-attached, and think of his heart."

"Think of the lotus of the heart, with petals downwards and running through it, the Suṣumnâ. Take in the breath, and, while throwing out the breath, imagine

[1] Avalon, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-9. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 51.
[3] Vivekânanda, *Râja-yoga*, p. 135.

that the lotus is turned with the petals upwards, and inside that is an effulgent light."[1]

Sometimes the guru will select a symbol and bid the chela visualize a door with the symbol painted on it. He is then to imagine himself passing through the door and looking around him. What he sees is supposed to bear relation to the symbol on the door. He is to describe to his master what has appeared to him, and his master will by this means test the sensitiveness of his subconscious mind.

Meditations which the Western intelligence can certainly not appreciate are also given—to concentrate the attention on the tip of the nose in order to experience the "absolute smell"; to meditate on the elephant in order to acquire the strength of that ponderous animal. It is not explained what good will accrue to the soul either from the absolute smell or from the power of the elephant.

You may meditate, too, you are told, "on anything that appeals to you," but a commentator with no sense of humour adds: "This does not mean any wicked thing."

Ethical Obligations.

Success in meditation will depend not only on perseverance and an innate aptitude, or merely on obedience to the teacher's commands, but on certain moral qualifications. The ethical obligations of the man who would perform yoga are divided into two classes. First are those which are necessary, called Yama, and, secondly, those which confer merit. These latter are called Niyama.

The injunctions of Yama are: To do no harm to any object, to speak the truth, to refrain from taking what belongs to another, to preserve continence, to practise forbearance and fortitude, to be merciful to all, to walk straightforwardly.

[1] Vivekânanda, *Râja-yoga*, p. 135.

Among the meritorious actions are numbered austerities, cheerfulness, belief in God, charity, worship of the Deity, hearing the exposition of Vedantic doctrines, repugnance to doing a thing prohibited by the Vedas, sound mind, observance of vows.

The Progress of the Yogi.

The progress of the yogi may be measured either by the stage of moral development that he has reached, or by his proficiency in the various types of ecstasy. It is common with Hindu mystics, as well as with mystics of other religions, to divide the progress of the seer into seven stages. The number seven, being a holy one, is naturally the most suitable for the enumeration of the divisions of the sacred path.

Here are the seven stages of the yogi, according to the Swâtmârâm Swâmi:[1]

1. *Subhechcha* (A longing for truth).—The yogi becomes "one who has rightly distinguished between the permanent and the impermanent; who has cultivated a feeling of dislike towards worldly pleasures; who, having acquired full mastery over his organs, physical and mental, feels an insatiable longing to free himself from this cycle of existence."

2. *Vicharana* (Right inquiry).—"He who has pondered over what he has read and heard, and realized it in his life."

3. *Tanumásana* (The fading out of the mind).—"When the mind, having abandoned the many, remains steadily fixed on the One." The yogi up to this point is still a Sadhaka or practiser, but in the next stage he becomes a Brahmavid.

4. *Satvapatti* (Attainment to the state of spirituality).—"He cognizes directly in himself the truth—I am Brahma."

Till now he was practising *Sampragnata Samadhi*, or contemplation where the consciousness of duality still lingers. In the three remaining stages he soars to *Asam-*

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 2, 3.

pragnata Samadhi—i.e., the states in which the seer has no consciousness of the triad Knower, Knowledge, and the Known.

5. *Asamsakta* (Unaffected by anything).—He is even unaffected by the "magical" powers that manifest themselves at this stage. He is now called Brahmavarya.

6. *Padarthabhavana* (Where external things do not appear to exist).—He sees Brahman everywhere, and does good, not by his own conscious will, but prompted by Brahma.

7. *Perpetual Samadhi.*—"He neither performs his daily duties himself, nor is prompted by others, but remains in perpetual Samadhi."[1]

Up to stage 6 this progress could be paralleled by writings of the Western mystics. The seeing of God everywhere, feeling the whole material creation alive with Him, and recognizing a spark of His divine light glowing behind the eyes of the most degraded of His fallen children, is a high attainment to the Christian as to the Hindu mystic. Nor does it necessarily lead, in practice, to Pantheistic doctrines, as the superficial critic is fond of alleging. In "perpetual Samadhi," however, the seer would seem to have overstepped the bounds of good sense, and it is difficult to understand why such a high degree of sanctity should be considered to attach to such a useless state. A brief survey of the Hindu's ideas of the value of certain states of consciousness is necessary before we proceed to examine and classify these states in detail, and before we can see why "perpetual Samadhi" should be so desirable.

Hindu "Values."

When I say that what the Hindu *admires above everything is a state of mind in which the unreality of the material world is made manifest, and the soul is conscious of its true being as part of a spiritual reality wider than itself*, I do not wish to be misunderstood. I have been assured by an English teacher of Hindu

[1] Pp. 2-3.

students that the two words most frequently heard in India are "rice" and "pice." It must in any case be obvious that the majority of Indians, like the majority of mankind elsewhere, are chiefly preoccupied with looking for the usual means of subsistence. In every country, however, there are certain definite qualities or possessions, which people naturally regard as excellent, and the men who own them are looked on as admirable or fortunate. We all, for instance, consider courage as a good thing. Every Englishman admires the holder of the Victoria Cross, even though he has no hope of ever gaining one himself.

In India, then, the most admirable man is he who is detached from worldly preoccupations. Mahatma Gandhi knows which note to strike when appealing to the national consciousness of the Hindu. The end and aim of the life of the devout Aryan is not riches nor progeny nor learning. In the hierarchy of caste the priest is above the king. The aim of life is release from life, release from "separateness." Suicide can offer no escape from life, for the man would merely reincarnate in a lower form. Nor can mere right action bring the highest good to pass, for though the man should reincarnate as a god, he is yet bound by causality, and is no more free than the outcast or the dog.

When, however, the Hindu has reached the apprehension of his true nature as pure spirit, free and undivided, he has risen above Karma, and nothing can harm him any more. To reach this apprehension by ecstasy is, he thinks, the best and surest way. Philosophical consideration about the nature of the Spirit of which he is a part, may hinder rather than help. To know that he is one with the Absolute suffices; speculation with regard to that Absolute may be mere intellectual curiosity and in no way promote his liberation. Samadhi, that state of mind in which man knows himself to be of the same nature as the basic reality of the universe, is considered to be of supreme value. The more prolonged and uninterrupted it is, the better.

The Result of Meditation.

Now let us for a moment imagine the seer, whether he be a primitive yogi seated at the foot of a tree in the depths of a jungle, or a present-day Hindu meditating amid quasi-European surroundings, engaged in trying to produce in himself Samadhi.

First of all, he assumes his asana, or posture, and by the regulating of the breath calms both mind and body. Next he fixes his attention on the subject chosen for meditation, and by extreme concentration excludes all irrelevant thoughts. This process may be described as a narrowing-down one, and the sensation experienced is of focusing the whole strength of the personality on one point. The attempt to do this is called Dharana (which may be loosely translated "concentration"), the stage when concentration has been accomplished Dhyana (usually but quite inadequately rendered by "meditation").

Then a marvellous thing happens. The consciousness, which has been artificially narrowed, suddenly and most wonderfully expands and dilates. It is as if the seer has passed through a strait gate and had come out into a boundless region beyond. Here, after a painful journey of effort, he has reached a wide place of joy and utter freedom. He is no longer cramped by personal consciousness, but participates in the limitless being of the Universal Spirit. This is Samadhi, this is superconsciousness.[1] On his return to the normal mode of being, the mystic feels transfigured, bathed in a river of immortality and of joy. This expansion of consciousness is as well known in the West as in the East. In the West it is valued for the knowledge of God which it gives, and for its actual influence on character and on conduct. In the East it is valued for itself alone.

[1] The three stages, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi, are together called Samyama.

Samadhi.

There are, of course, many definitions of Samadhi, and various classifications of different kinds of Samadhi. Some of the definitions would pass for Western descriptions of Christian ecstasy. For instance, "As a grain of salt thrown into the water becomes one with it, a like union between the soul and the atma is Samadhi." Samadhi is variously spoken of as "immortality, "concentration," "void and yet not void," "the supreme state," "the emancipated state," etc. An English writer, Edward Carpenter, describes it thus:[1]

"After months, but more probably years, of intermittent practice, the power of control grows; curious but distinct physiological changes take place; one day the student finds that Thought has gone; he stands for a moment in Oblivion; then *that* veil lifts, and there streams through his being a vast and illumined consciousness, glorious, that fills and overflows him, 'surrounding him so that he is like a pot in water which has the liquid within and without.' In this consciousness there is divine knowledge, but no thought. It is *Samadhi*, the universal 'I am.'"

"Is everyone supposed to attain Samadhi?" I asked a Brahman, "or is that considered a high achievement?"

"It is considered a high achievement," he answered, "but theoretically everyone is supposed to be able to attain it, just as in theory everyone is reckoned capable of learning higher mathematics, though in practice but few will be found who have the capacity."

"Even if one could experience Samadhi every day," I suggested, "one should not."

"Why ever not?" exclaimed the Brahman. "We do not hold that there is anything *unnatural* or *supernatural* about Samadhi, and the supreme attainment is

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 168.

to be in a state of perpetual Samadhi. In India we have our Nitya yogi, those to whom Samadhi is a daily experience. In Samadhi, God dwells in us and looks at the world through our eyes. We are the flute and He the breath that puffs through us, making perfect music. This is the most natural state."

Samprajnata and Asamprajnata Samadhi.

Samadhi is generally classified as Samprajnata ("with discrimination") and Asamprajnata ("without discrimination"); in the former the yogi retains, in the latter he does not retain, at the moment of ecstasy, consciousness of himself and of his own personality. As might have been expected, Asamprajnata Samadhi is the more exalted of the two.

In order to banish the sense of the ego, not only from the conscious, but also from the subconscious mind, a very high degree of concentration is necessary, and, in addition, a persistent unselfishness of character. The man who is normally preoccupied with himself and his own affairs will find it much harder to rid himself of self-consciousness, even when in a state of ecstasy, than the man who invariably considers the Universal Good rather than his own. There would therefore seem to be some justification for considering Asamprajnata Samadhi as higher than Samprajnata, though it may only indicate a more extraordinary power of focussing the attention on some subject outside the seer's own self.

Samprajnata Samadhi would seem to be capable of being divided into the following classes:

1. *Savitarka* (With question).—Here you meditate on external material objects until they give up their meaning to you. (One may compare this with the modern Buddhist meditation on a rose. Tennyson, when musing on the flower in the crannied wall, seems to have been indulging in a similar spiritual exercise.)

2. *Nirvitarka* (Without question).—You take a similar

object for meditation, but abstract it from time and space.

3. *Savichara.*—Instead of taking a material object as the subject for meditation, you consider the tanmatras, or fine elements—as, for instance, the mind, the equilibrium of its qualities, etc.

4. *Nirvichara.*—You meditate on abstract ideas out of time and space.

The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali.

While there are now extant a number of books on yoga, many of them (as, for instance, *How to be a Yogi*, by Swâmi Abhedananda) containing the precepts adapted and simplified, and spoilt in the process, for European and American use, the standard work still is the *Yoga Sutra of Patanjali.* As far as I am aware, three translations of this work exist in English. The oldest is that by Rajendra Lala Mitra. This writer had unfortunately been studying German pessimistic philosophy, and was so certain that the Germans and the Hindus had between them given the final explanation of the nature of the universe that he seems to have coloured his translator's ink with Teutonic ideas and to have produced a strange and unintelligible book. A commentary, which he has also rendered, adds to the difficulty of understanding the text, and a further "explanation" translated by him makes confusion worse confounded.

The Yoga-System of Patañjali, by James Haughton Woods in the Harvard Oriental Series must, I suppose, be taken as the work of a first-rate scholar. Professor Woods, however, would seem to be unacquainted with the nature of the psychological problems which yoga-sutra raises, and of the sense in which such words as "meditation," "contemplation," etc., are generally employed by mystical writers. No guidance can be obtained from this translation of the yoga-sutra, with regard to the progressive stages of ecstasy, because the terms used are in contradiction with those employed by

other translators to designate the stages as set forth by Sufi and Buddhist writers.[1]

There remains the translation by Swâmi Vivekânanda. He is placed at a disadvantage by the fact that he wished to appeal to a Western public, and may unconsciously have toned down Hindu eccentricities before presenting them to his readers. However, the system, as set forth by him, is intelligible and coherent. Various odd remarks, such as the promise quoted above that he who meditates on the elephant will acquire the strength of the elephant, have not been expunged, in spite of the risk of their striking the English reader as comic, and one may reasonably hope that the translation is a fair one. I have therefore gone to Vivekânanda's little book for the information I required as to Patanjali's yoga system. The translation has, moreover, the merit of having been made by a man who had practised the instructions for himself, and who was one of the most interesting of the known examples of the modern yogi.

Patanjali is not to be considered as the originator of his teaching. His methods and instructions are of unknown antiquity.

Yoga in its debased form may be studied along any Indian highway, where wandering ascetics display their tortured limbs and beg for the offerings of the faithful. Some of these men may be genuinely religious and only a few of them impostors. Wandering sadhus and sannyasins are mostly recruited, I believe, from the lower castes; but in yoga there is no caste, and by holiness and austerity a pariah may become the equal of a Brahman. So, too, a woman may rise above the natural inferiority of her sex and even act as guru to a man.

A course of yoga, lasting, perhaps, for years, *is considered the natural way of solving religious problems.*

Since I began to write these pages, two instances have

[1] *Cf.* the works of Professor D. B. Macdonald, and of Professor and Mrs. Rhys Davids.

been brought to my notice of Indians who, wishing to discover religious truth, sought for direct intuition by way of solitude and meditation. One of them went away for twelve years into the Himalayas, where he passed, so I am assured, most of the time in a trance. During this long period of Samadhi his consciousness was active, though his body slept, and he was able to apprehend supernatural truth. He was finally awakened by a deer leaping over his inanimate body. On his return to the world he preached a union of Mohammedanism and Hinduism—probably the only two religions of which he was cognisant—urging on his hearers the importance of a spiritual religion, and calling on them not to care about mere external observances. His conclusions, he claimed, had been reached as a result of meditation, by his spirit directly apprehending the Universal Spirit.

The other Hindu of whom I heard, gave himself up to solitary musing for two years, in order to discover whether Christianity were true or not. Having received direct assurance from God that it was, he proceeded to preach Christianity publicly.

So, too, by spiritual exercises Keshab Chandra Sen was enabled to free himself from the superstitions in which he had been educated and rise to the lofty spirituality expressed in his creed.[1]

"I believe in the Church Universal, the deposit of all ancient wisdom and the receptacle of all modern science, which recognizes in all prophets and saints a harmony, in all scriptures a unity, and through all dispensations a continuity, which abjures all that separates and divides, and always magnifies unity and peace, which harmonizes reason and faith, yoga and bhakti, asceticism and social duty . . . and which shall make all nations and sects one kingdom and one family in the fulness of time."

Or, as Harendranath Maitra expresses it:[2]

[1] J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 73.

[2] *Hinduism the World Ideal*, p. 101.

"This is the universal ideal for the human race. Not one faith, but a federation of faiths. Not one ideal, but a federation of ideals. As the individual will be saved by the deeper vision, so will the race be also. The deeper vision lies in *deeper spiritual culture*."

"*Magical Powers*."

Turning from these broadened conceptions of religion which arise out of spiritual exercises, we pass on to consider the so-called "magical powers" which come to the yogi. The holy man, by refining his body, dominating his desires, and attuning himself to the Source of all Power, is supposed to develop quite naturally powers which to the ordinary man appear supernatural. Just as the chrysalis might marvel at the butterfly's power of winged flight, so the undeveloped man wonders at "miracles" performed by a human being a little more advanced in development. These powers will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on Buddhist meditations, but a few quotations are not out of place here. A list of them appears in *The Principles of Tantra*[1] as follows:

Destruction.

Driving away.

Bringing under control (which would include hypnotism).

Arrest (*e.g.*, staying a storm, striking a man dumb).

Causing antagonisms between persons.

Curative and helping power in disease, misfortune, and danger.

Other writers give instances of yogis being able to walk about unharmed among wild beasts, to fast for extraordinary lengths of time,[2] and so forth. The majority of the instances of "magical powers," however, refer to phenomena of clairvoyance, clairaudience,

[1] Avalon, p. 112 note.

[2] Some people believed that Mr. McSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, when on hunger-strike, was fed by angels.

telepathy, and the capacity for inducing Samadhi in pupils. It is curious that Swâmi Vivekânanda used the existence of the admitted fact of telepathy as a basis for his prophecy that wireless telephony would shortly be discovered—a prophecy which, of course, was soon fulfilled.

Ramakrishna Pramahamsa possessed some of the "magical powers."[1]

"Sri Ramakrishna injected his own consciousness into Noren (Vivekânanda). How he did this is not fully known. Noren would frequently feel *shocks* of spiritual consciousness, if such a term may be used."

I have met with a man who told me that he was able to experience the ecstasies and spiritual delights of his guru when his teacher willed that he should do so.

Vivekânanda, in his turn, learnt the secret of this transmission of spiritual virtue. His disciple Abhedananda writes:

"As Noren touched me, I felt a strong sensation pass through my whole body. It was like an electric current. When I had received this I passed into a deep state of meditation and lost all consciousness of the body and of the ego, in an unspeakable feeling of blessedness."

Visions and Photisms.

The seeing of visions and of heavenly lights is as frequent in the annals of Eastern as of Western mysticism. Here is a good description of a photism, which might have come straight from the Welsh revival:[2]

"Noren's experience was of the nature of light. He saw a point of light revolving and finally becoming steadied and fixed. It appeared between the eyebrows, where, according to the Scriptures, the eye of the mind, the spiritual sight, is located. From the point of light

[1] *The Life of Swâmi Vivekânanda*, pp. 322, 376.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 209.

which Noren saw, various colours issued forth in splendour. Then his consciousness would expand as if to encompass fields of attention unknown to the normal functioning of the mind. At this point, however, his meditation would break, and the effulgence of light vanished."

It is this expansion of consciousness, this freedom of the spiritual world, which is—let me repeat it—the object of the Hindu's meditation.

When the yogi has reached the state in which he can attain to Samadhi whenever he so desires it, he may liberate himself from his austerities and from the discipline that he has previously imposed upon himself. "Hymns, recitation of mantra, contemplation, vows, restraints, are not for those who know the Brahman."[1]

Now he no longer has need of training, for he has reached his goal.

"These manifold revelations which he previously perceived as outside himself, he finally comes to know as verily within himself, as the substance of personality, and even beyond this as the substance of Divine Life. . . . He who formerly as the saint saw God now has become one with God."[2]

NOTE.—Readers will have observed that when I follow, or quote from, other authors, I copy their rendering of Sanskrit, etc. Personally, I prefer the simplest possible transliteration—*e.g.*, Dharana rather than Dhāraṇā, etc.

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[1] Avalon, *op. cit.*, p. 220.
[2] *Life of Swâmi Vivekânanda*, p. 230.

CHAPTER III

BUDDHIST MEDITATIONS

Buddhism.

OF all the non-Christian religions, Buddhism is the most attractive and the most baffling to the Western mind. On the one hand, we have the mild and dignified figure of Gotama Sakyamuni, who has seemed to many people worthy to stand beside Jesus of Nazareth Himself. On the other hand, we have a gloomy system of philosophy which sees nothing but sorrow in this world and whose best hopes are for nothing more joyous than the cessation of desire.

The character of Gotama, when stripped of those legendary attributes of Prince Siddhartha which make *The Light of Asia* such romantic reading, is, through the efforts of scholars, gradually emerging into clearness. He appears as a man gifted indeed with a special aptitude for religion, and with extreme sensitiveness to the troubles of others, but in no way divine.[1] Gradually and thoughtfully he groped his way towards the truth, until after a sharp spiritual crisis he perceived where peace of heart lay. Then, as must always happen under similar circumstances, he gathered friends round him, and taught them how they, too, might attain. It seems highly improbable that he had any idea he was founding a world-religion. His teaching was frank and simple. Courageous facing of the sorrows of life, and self-discipline in order to rise above them, no reliance on priest and magic ritual, kindliness to others, detachment from worldly ambition—these were the pre-

[1] See Dr. E. J. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha*, p. 227: "The earliest conception of the nature of Buddha that we find is that he was a human being."

liminaries to attainment. He took, also, the current system of spiritual exercises, the yoga of which we have spoken above, cut off from it the excrescences of extreme asceticism, and made use of it to teach his disciples to free themselves from the bondage of their own selves.

Buddhism, perhaps more than any other religion, has been changed and elaborated away from the simplicity of its early days. In Ceylon and other regions where the Hinayana "vehicle" is employed, it has grown, on the whole, more arid and pessimistic. Nirvana, the consolation of the faithful, is there, perhaps, even conceived as ceasing to be, and Not-Being as the final reality of the universe.[1] Among the Mahayanists, however, we find a rich flowering of cults, romantic deifications of aspects of Buddha both male and female, and also an exalted mysticism in which a universal god is worshipped under the appellation of Boundless Light, and the sayings of Gotama are understood in their spiritual sense.

Exoteric and Esoteric Teaching.

I have been assured by a Buddhist priest that there was from the earliest times a distinction in the teaching of the Buddha. There was the instruction given to the crowd, and there was the secret tradition imparted in private and preserved only among the initiate. The handbook of the secret tradition was said to be the so-called *Diamond Sutra*.[2] This legend of a hidden teaching is, perhaps, more fascinating than credible. Still, it must be true that, whether the Master does or does not give all his instruction to the crowd, some men will understand and others will not. Nor need the mere fact of differences of interpretation lead men to assume differences of teaching.

[1] See below, p. 109, on the exact meaning of Nirvana.

[2] *Ching-Kang-Ching, or Prajnā Paramita.* See the English translation by William Gemmell.

Buddhism a System of Psychology more than a Theology.

Buddhism, like any other religion, is most easily understood when looked at from the psychological point of view. Gotama starts with the fundamental assumption that the individual suffers pain. To this he adds the axiom that craving for life causes existence and therefore causes pain. He seems also to have been impressed with the fact that a man is not only himself, but also part of something wider than himself. From his ego-consciousness and consequent self-assertiveness springs all the evil of the world. With the expansion of consciousness brought about by meditation comes the realization that man is not the isolated ego he fancied himself to be. You may tell a man that he is only a stream of consciousness and a chain of attributes and no ego at all, as the Buddhist philosophy asserts, and he may give intellectual assent to your proposition, but it is only by experience that his ego-consciousness can be destroyed and made harmless. The seeker after liberation must not only *know* that craving for personal existence is the cause of sorrow; he must have a direct intuition and sensation of a state in which craving and feeling cease.

Hence the immense practical importance of spiritual exercises in the Buddhist system. Those who would enter from the outer court, where flowers are offered to the figure of Gotama, into the inner sanctuary, where the heart of the teacher is understood, can do so only by the discipline of meditation.

Conversion.

Buddhist religious experience is almost always found to begin with some kind of conversion. This is often very sudden—a swift conviction of error, an immediate resolve to begin a changed life. The same capacity to leave the wrong and cleave to the right, which psychologists have noticed with some astonishment in Christian

conversion, is also present in Buddhist conversion. The man who is struck to the heart by the truth of the Dharma receives in a moment power to submit himself to that law. Dr. Underwood, in his careful study, *Conversion: Christian and Non-Christian* (which came into my hands only as I was finally revising this book for the press), calls attention to some of the outstanding characteristics of Buddhist conversions. Unfortunately, however, for my purpose, he deals chiefly with early Buddhism, and has little to say about the experiences of living men and women.

Classifying conversions as dominantly *intellectual*, *moral* and *emotional*, Dr. Underwood points out that the early Buddhists were actuated chiefly by a desire to *know*. They were not looking for a loving Father of the Universe in communion with whom they might find peace for their souls, but for a view of the world which would satisfy their intellects. "The phrase most frequently used in the Pali texts to mark the moment of a man's conversion is 'He obtained the pure and spotless Eye of Truth.'[1] This means that the convert had come to realize the truth of the central Buddhist doctrine of the impermanency of all things," or rather, I should say, the central Buddhist doctrine that life is sorrow, that craving or desire causes life, and that desire can be extinguished by training and self-control.

The author rightly shows that the Buddhist convert must depend on his own exertions for that unification of personality which alone brings peace. He lays, however, singularly little stress on the practice of meditation. Dr. Underwood states clearly that conversion is but the beginning of the path. He emphasizes the fact that the Buddhist convert never looks for "grace" to help him along the way. The gods in whom these early seekers believed were but beings in a higher state of existence than themselves, like them subject to the law of Karma, and unable to afford them supernatural spiritual help. Dr. Underwood quotes exten-

[1] Underwood, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

sively from the Psalms of the Brethren and of the Sisters in which meditation or the states or magical powers resulting from meditation are mentioned, but does not say how vital meditation was considered to be for the attainment of insight.

> "And first as a novice, virtuous and keen[1]
> To cultivate the upward mounting way,
> To cast out lust and with it all ill-will,
> And therewith one by one, the deadly Drugs.
> Then to the Bhikkhuni of ripening powers
> Rose in a vision mem'ries of the past.
> Limpid and clear the mystic vistas grew,
> Expanding by persistent exercise.
> Act, speech and thought, I saw as not myself,
> Children of cause, fleeting, impermanent,
> And now with every poisonous Drug cast out,
> Cool and serene I see Nibbana's peace."

> "In fivefold concentrated ecstasy,[2]
> My heart goes up in peace and unity,
> Serene composure have I made my own;
> My vision as a god's is clarified,
> I know the destinies of other lives—
> Whence beings come and whither they do go;
> Life here below, or otherwhere of life—
> Steadfast and rapt, in fivefold Jhana sunk."

The experiences here described are surely not those of the "stream-entrant," of the convert just setting out on the mystic way, but those of "once-returner" or "never-returner," if not of the perfect arahat. These poets had travelled far along the "Noble Eightfold Path," with its stages Right Views, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Life, Right Energy, Right Recollection and Right Rapture. Only by the persistent practice of spiritual exercises, extending over a number of years, can the aspirant hope to attain to Samma Samadhi (Right Rapture), and so win complete deliverance.

The Eightfold Path of Buddhism, with its conception

[1] *Therigatha*, 99-101; quoted, pp. 144, 173.
[2] *Theragatha*, 916 f.; quoted pp. 145, 155.

of steady and ordered intellectual and moral progress, is so familiar that I need not say more about it here. Conversion and the perception of where Truth lies, may indeed be sudden, but arahatship must be, except in a few rare cases, the result of patient training and self-discipline.

Less familiar, but recently made known to English readers in Mrs. Rhys Davids' admirable little book *Buddhist Psychology*, is the careful study which Buddhists have made of the human mind. Long before the Greeks had begun their speculations about thought and personality, the Buddhists had arrived at certain conclusions with regard to man, which they have not yet seen need to reverse. In modern Japan, side by side with a study of the historical Gotama, which corresponds to our "Higher Criticism," and which shocks pious lovers of tradition, even as Higher Criticism does, we find Buddhist students occupied with psychological studies. In Burma the traditional systems are finding able modern exponents.

In these systems of psychology the importance of spiritual exercises is insisted on, and their results are carefully tabulated and classified.

Personality.

Before approaching the Buddhist conception of how the human mind works, it is necessary that two things be firmly grasped. The first is that the *Buddhists do not admit that there is any ego* or psyche, but only a chain or stream of events, psychical and other, giving the illusion of an ego. *Consciousness* is one link in the sequence of things. Matter is, however, usually accepted as real, for purposes of discussion, and probably usually believed to be actually so. Some Mahayanists reduced all reality to Consciousness, and came to look on this Consciousness, which manifests itself in apparently separate individuals, as being practically God—*i.e.*, they would quite agree with St. John when he says

God is a Spirit, or, rather, Spirit is God. Other Buddhists hold that consciousness, and with it the illusion of personality, exists only when there is something to be conscious of; that is to say, when there are sights, sounds, tastes, smells, etc. The essential point, however, in the opinion of all schools, is that *individuality is an illusion.*

How does this affect the study of psychology? How can I study a man's mind if I do not believe that he has an ego, a psyche? Certain English and American students have lately come near to the Buddhist position in holding that our personality consists only in the power we have of imagining that we are a unity, of making, as they say, a synthesis of our moments-consciousness. In one mood I am a gay creature, in another a pessimist; just now I am intellectual; in half an hour I may turn into a cook or a housemaid. Those strange freaks we read of, who thought they were two or even three different people each, were just like ourselves, except that they lacked the power of synthesis. Still, this synthesis is a unifying principle, and gives the psychologist something fixed and constant, the equivalent of an ego, about which to make statements.

What is the Constant in Buddhism? The stream of consciousness varies from moment to moment; so, too, do the objects or ideas of which there is consciousness. *What is constant and invariable is the relation between the two.* This, which is roughly equivalent to "point of view," is what makes it possible for there to be apparently coherent personalities.

Of course, in ordinary life the normal Buddhist is not troubled by being a mere stream of consciousness and events, and behaves just as though he had an ego—just as Mr. Sidis or Mr. Goodhart, for instance, are probably not troubled by considering themselves as syntheses of many personalities.

Karma.

The second point which must be clearly understood is the Buddhist theory of Karma. The Indian conception is well known. Each individual reincarnates, and his future incarnation is decided by his good or bad deeds in the present one. Nothing could be simpler. In Buddhism, however, a difficulty arises. Having got rid of the ego, what are you going to do about reincarnation? Each particular stream of consciousness produces certain effects, which in their turn become causes of further streams of consciousness. This is the old theory in another form. Ethics still consist in actions and in thoughts which will produce good Karma, and which will bring into existence a clean and lovely stream of consciousness. Spiritual exercises have the immediate and practical importance of inducing states of mind which make good Karma, so that even if craving is not completely stilled and Nirvana still unattained, meditation has some useful results.

Contents of the Moments-Consciousness.

Let us now turn to a modern Buddhist psychologist and take his account of the contents of the human mind. This is from the introductory essay by Shwe Zan Aung to the *Compendium of Philosophy.*[1]

"*Consciousness is primarily composed of seven mental properties* (cetasikas)—namely:

1. *Phassa* (Contact)—*i.e.*, awareness of the objective presentation.

2. *Vedanā* (Feeling)—*i.e.*, awareness of being affected as an animate organism, whether for pleasure, pain, or indifference.

3. *Saññā* (Perception)—*i.e.*, recognition of the localization of sensation proper, and further, the awareness of the marks, real or imaginary, by which an object of thought is, or may be, recognized.

[1] *Abhidhammatta-Sangaha,* pp. 14-17, trans. from Pali by Shwe Zan Aung, ed. Mrs. Rhys Davids.

4. *Cetanā* (Will or volition).

5. *Ekkegatā* (Individuality of object).—The mental property by which the Object of consciousness is necessarily regarded as an individual occupying a definite position in space or time or both. (Time and space in Buddhism are regarded as subjective elements.)

6. *Jīvindriya* (Psychic life).

7. *Manasikāra* (Attention)."

The Buddhist himself would be the first to admit a certain artificiality in the foregoing analysis. The moments of consciousness pass into each other and merge like the sound-vibrations in a peal of bells. To arrest each moment, to isolate it from its neighbour, and to split it up into its component parts, must be to divest it of life.

The account given of the content of consciousness is, be it noted, highly self-conscious and reflective. We have, first of all, the shock, coming from without, of an object or an idea obtruding itself on a man's notice. Then the feeling "I am aware, I notice." After that comes "I am aware of pleasure, pain, etc.," and, following close behind it, the attitude taken up by the will with regard to the sensations. With this goes an abstraction of the essential nature of the thing considered—*i.e.*, a definite recognition of the qualities of, let us say, a lotus, which makes the mind know that the flower before it is a lotus, and which will enable the mind to recognize and identify a similar flower in the future. Joined to these properties of consciousness are life and attention, without which no thought would be possible.

The particular components of each moment-consciousness as given by the Buddhist would seem to be somewhat fanciful and arbitrary. They compare, however, very favourably with the artificialities of the scholastic psychology which dominated European conceptions for so many years. The elusiveness, moreover, of Buddhist psychological conceptions, and the absence of definite connotations to particular words—language being used as picturesque and suggestive rather than

as exact—makes their system hard to criticize. Buddhist psychologists seem to prefer that a word should evoke a set of ideas, instead of conveying an exact meaning, and modern science cannot, if it would, meet them on their own ground.

The properties of each moment-consciousness, as set forth above, are nevertheless considered important to the Buddhist for the part they play in unmasking the delusion of the ego. Just as one unwraps the coating of the onion, expecting to find something hidden away beneath the wrappings, so the man may unfold the layers of consciousness seeking the ego, only to discover that there is nothing there. Meditations on the properties of the moment-consciousness form part of the monk's training.

Where Meditation is carried out at the Present Day.

I have records of spiritual exercises being performed nowadays in China, Japan, Burma, and Nepaul. Certainly in India and Ceylon they formed an intrinsic part of the Buddhist religion, and in the latter existed until recently, if, indeed, they have altogether fallen into disuse now. Thibetan Buddhism, with its complicated ecclesiastical organization and its splendid ritual, has yet room for quiet devotion to spiritual exercises, but I have not any detailed accounts of Thibetan meditations. They would seem mostly to centre round the sentence *Om manipadme hum*,[1] on which many volumes of commentary have been written.

In some Thibetan monasteries there are four "faculties" for the teaching of (1) mysticism and the art of the contemplative life, (2) liturgy, (3) medicine, (4) theology. Pilgrimage accompanied by the constant repetition of a mantra, or prayer formula, is a favourite form of devotion. According to a recent writer,[2] streams

[1] "O Holder of the Jewelled Lotus." (Manipadme, one word, fem. voc.)

[2] Joseph F. Roch, *The National Geographic Magazine*, August, 1926.

of pilgrims constantly cross the sacred Doker Pass between Thibet and China. As they march they murmur "OM MANIPADME HUM" over and over again. Some whirl prayer-wheels in their hands. Others alternately lie down and stand, thus measuring with their bodies the whole length of the pass, across ice and rock and snow. It is said that there are monks and nuns who spend the whole of their lives in crossing and recrossing the holy mountain, finally, it may be, throwing themselves over a precipice in order to gain deliverance from rebirth. The summit of the pass is planted with prayer-flags, placed there by the pilgrims.

A Japanese Temple of Silence.

Meditation is, of course, most generally practised by monks and nuns. In Japan, however, the Temples of Silence belonging to the Zen, or Meditation sect, are thrown open once a year for the ceremonies of the "Great Meeting with Spirit," and visitors, though not Europeans, are admitted. Shall we, to attune ourselves to the mood of meditation, enter with Yone Noguchi[1] into the great monastery of Enkakuji, and try to gather into our own minds that contemplative calm which makes the Buddhist religion intelligible?

Thus writes Yone Noguchi, a restless Westernized Oriental:

"I had journeyed from Tokyo, here to read a page or two of the whole language of silence. In truth, I came here to confess how little is our human intellect.

"The hall (of Enkakuji) was not yet lighted when I crept into it like a wandering breeze seeking the soul of Nirvana. And I was at once conducted by a young priest into the Assembly Chamber. I say he was a young man, but who knows whether he were not an old priest? It seemed to me that I was already led into a magic atmosphere in whose world-old incense I lost all sense of time and place.

"I was gracefully entering into dream when a priest

[1] *The Story of Yone Noguchi,* ch. xi.

brought into the chamber the lighted candles, announcing that the ceremony would soon begin. . . .

"I was told that the Buddha was nobody but the right mind, and that you and I can be the Buddha right on the spot. . . You have to leave your human knowledge before you may enter here. And so did I to the best of my ability.

"The *hangi*, or wooden block, was tapped, and the monks, fifty in all, slipped into the chamber from the 'Meditation House.' I looked back and saw three *bonboris* (hand candlesticks) floating forward, and then the figures of four priests. The chief priest was coming.

"The chief priest sat before the lattice door of the Buddha image shrine. Then the chief priest finished reading Shogaku Kokushi's words of warning:

"'We have three classes of students. One who casts away every affinity with fire, and studies his own self, is the very best. There is one whose practice is not so particularly pure, but he loves to learn; he is in the middle class. One who quenches his own spiritual light and delights in licking the Buddha's saliva is of the lowest. If there be one who drinks only the beauty of books and lives by writing, we call him a shaven-headed layman, and he cannot be in even the lowest class of our students. (How despicable is one who writes for writing's sake!) And of course we cannot admit into our Buddhist circle one who spends his time dissolutely eating and sleeping too fully; the ancient worthies used to call such an one a clothes-horse and a rice-bag. He is not a priest at all, and cannot be allowed to enter the temple grounds as a student.'

"When the priest had spoken further, the monks stood and read the 'Dharani of Great Mercy,' and ended with their vows of consecration.

"'We vow to save all innumerous mankind.'

"'We vow to cut down all the exhaustless lusts.'

"'We vow to learn all the boundless laws.'

"'We vow to complete all the peerless understanding.'

"(Later in my own room) I read the words written on a *kakemono: 'Hear the voice of thy hand.'* Here we must find our own salvation by the power of our contemplation. Where is the voice of your hand except in yourself?

"Thus you meditate. You have to bend your right leg, and set it in the crotch of your left, which, too, must be put on your right. Then the back of your right hand must be placed on the left leg, and the back of your left hand within your right palm; and both your thumbs must be raised to form a circle. You must not look up nor down; your ears and shoulders must be straight in line, and also your nose and navel. Open your eyes as usual, and breathe in and out slowly. Above all, you must find the place of imaginary existence of your soul right in your left palm. Then will your mind grow into silence, as Buddha on the lotus flower, floating on the peaceful bosom of the universe, pure from all the sense of life and death, you and Nature being perfectly at one. *To make the separate self cease from its selfishness* is the keynote of the Zen. After all, it is nothing but the religion of universal love and humanity."

From such meditations and reflections as these the ordinary Buddhist layman expects to return to his worldly life refreshed and strengthened, just as a Catholic layman faces the world again after a retreat.

Burmese Meditation Circles.

In Burma at the present day there has been a revival of the practice of spiritual exercises, and meditation circles have been formed to which Europeans are admitted. The aspirants meet together once a week, and, a suitable subject for meditation having been suggested by their leader, proceed to consider it for an hour or more in complete silence. They meditate seated in a circle, and are recommended to breathe deeply and slowly. On one occasion an English friend of mine who

attended such a meeting told me a member of the circle appeared to go to sleep, but it was afterwards discovered that he was in a trance. My friend never reached the trance stage. He was, however, sensible of the influence of other minds on his own, and said that he felt much calmed and uplifted by the quiet concentration of his companions.

A Japanese Priest.

I have been fortunate in securing from a Buddhist priest some particulars of meditation as he himself had practised it in his Japanese monastery. He belongs to the Soto-Shu sect, who devote more time to meditation than any other except the Rin-Zai, who are supposed to pass the whole of their lives in contemplation.

"The object of meditation is to discover the Buddha within us," said my informant. "By it, too, we find Buddha everywhere." Everyone can meditate, theoretically speaking, but in practice want of time and too many distractions stand in the way. Generally only monks meditate.

Among the Soto-Shu meditation is carried on all the year round, but from December 1 to 8 the monks meditate all day and night in the monastery.

Each monk has a teacher. Sometimes the teacher will gather his pupils round him and meditate with them in silence, leading their devotions. More often they go to him, one by one, explain their state of mind, and receive a suitable subject for meditation. This subject, which may be symbolic and difficult to understand—for instance, "Consider the noise of two hands struck together, and then the noise of one hand"—may occupy them for as long as one year.

The monks of the Soto-Shu assemble daily in the big hall of the monastery, and sit in a semicircle in front of the statue of Gotama. Their posture is cross-legged; they are taught to breathe deeply and keep their eyes open, gazing at the ground. For one hour in the morn-

ing and two hours in the afternoon they read aloud the sacred texts composed by Do-Gen, founder of the sect. If any monk should fall asleep, another one, specially appointed for the purpose, will prod him with a stick.

Formerly there were a hundred days, from May to July, and a hundred from September to January, set apart for particular meditations. At these times the teacher must be present at the temple and give special lessons in meditation. Sometimes he gives stories of former monks, their trials, their triumphs, their religious experiences. Again, he will explain to his pupils that *we are one with Buddha*, and bid them meditate on that.

The monks of the Soto-Shu deny the absolute authority of any book, preferring to rely on the inward light of experience. Sometimes in very special cases the teacher will, as it were, *inject his own spiritual experience into the heart of his pupil.* There are cases on record of Hindu gurus and Mohammedan sheikhs doing this to their pupils.

Buddhist teachers lay no special claim to "magical powers," but this priest informed me that there are many instances of their being clairvoyant, having the gift of healing, etc.

When a pupil is sufficiently advanced he is given a certificate to the effect that he himself, having fully understood the lessons, may teach them in his turn. "Indeed," said the priest, "when a monk has discovered the Buddha within, he must teach. Pupils will surely come to him, and he has no right to withhold that which he knows."

Preliminary Obligations for Pupils.

As in Hinduism, so in Buddhism certain virtues are expected of the man or woman who would practise spiritual exercises. "He who has not sympathy with all living things, and with Nature," said a Buddhist to me, "cannot even begin to be a Buddhist."

The pupil must be full of benevolence, compassion, cheerfulness, indifference, or equanimity.[1]

Or again, he must be[2] skilful, upright, honest, mild in speech, gentle, free from arrogance, cheerful, contented, unencumbered with much property, having the passions under control, wise, temperate, not desirous of obtaining much from those who would assist him. These virtues, be it noted, are all somewhat passive, and conduce to the needful calm and unruffled state of mind.

The follower of Buddha who intends to embark on meditations and to reach those states known as the Jhanas and the Aruppas is not urged to spur himself on by any kind of fervour of devotion to his master, Gotama. In the annals of the Buddhist saints, Gotama is said to appear in visions to the faithful, as Christ appears to His saints in the Christian Church, while expressions of love to his lord are as frequent on Buddhist as on Christian lips. Still, the state of mind recommended to the Buddhist is not one of religious enthusiasm. It is one of grave benevolence to his fellowmen, and of inner serenity and detachment. The aspirant is carefully warned not to disquiet himself by any emotion, however excellent it may appear to him. Rapturous adoration of Gotama would be as much out of place as self-torture or any other form of excess.

Dangers of Intellectualism.

The Buddhist is taught to be on his guard not only against religious emotion, but against intellectualism and the love of argument. Curiously enough, though the meditations of the Buddhist are more often "intellectual" than "hypnotic," and though their mystics are distinguished for the subtlety and acuteness of their minds, metaphysical speculation and theological controversy are both looked on as snares in the path of the saint. Of course, from the practical point of view both

[1] See H. Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 54.
[2] D. J. Gogerly, *Ceylon Buddhism*, vol. iii., p. 347.

speculation and controversy quicken a man's sense of his own ego, besides at times exciting his imagination and rousing the turbulent powers of his mind. A deliberate contemplation of the facts of existence as set before him by authority, together with a resolute elimination of the man's own notions and prejudices, are recommended as making for the state of mental calm necessary for meditation. An ignoring of the ugly side of life is, on the other hand, not desirable, because sin, disease and death may at any time force themselves on a man's notice. His calm must be proof against all attacks from within and without. And thus is he warned against the perils which come from his own intellect.[1]

"*What is the intoxicant of speculative opinion?*"

"To hold that the world is eternal, or that it is not eternal, infinite or finite; that the living soul is the body, or that the living soul is a different thing from the body, or that he who has won truth exists after death, or does not exist after death, or both exists and does not exist after death, or neither exists nor does not exist after death—this kind of opinion, this walking in opinion, this jungle of opinion, wilderness of opinion, puppet-show of opinion, scuffling of opinion, the fetter of opinion, the grip and tenacity of it, the inclination towards it, the being infected by it, this by-path, wrong road, wrongness, this 'fording-place,' this shiftiness of grasp—this is called the 'Intoxicant of Speculative Opinion.'"

Methods of Meditation.

The Buddhist student has, after this warning, doubtless made up his mind not to wander off along into the jungle of metaphysics, and will be ready for some advice in the training of the mind. Shwe Zan Aung[2] says: "After cutting off the ten worldly cares, he

[1] "A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics." 1st book in the *Abhidhamma pithaka, the Dhamma Sangani* (Compendium of States). Introduction by Mrs. Rhys Davids, p. 294.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

should repair to an adept or expert, with the sevenfold qualification for instruction in the art of meditation. He should have implicit faith in his teacher, and give himself up entirely, body and mind to him. . . . After having carefully selected an object of meditation suited to his character, he should avoid unsuitable places and repair to a secluded spot which has the necessary conditions."

Then:[1] "The student recluse commences with calling to mind the three gems—the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha—and taking refuge in them. There then follows a formula of confession and absolution to be repeated three times. Then a statement of the state of mind it is desired to call up. Then a renewed appeal to the memory of the Buddha and the great disciples of the past. The aspirant 'seats himself cross-legged, keeping his body erect, firm in self-possession; thoughtfully he inhales, thoughtfully exhales his breath, so that, taking a long in-breathing or a long out-breathing, or taking a quick in-breathing or a quick out-breathing, he knows in each case what he does.'

"So far he has been squatting on the ground on his heels, and with joined palms (the attitude of reverence); and now he sits on the ground cross-legged with his hands on his lap (the attitude of thought). . . . This constant change of posture, which takes place more than 1500 times in the course of the whole exercise, completely excludes any notion of hypnotic trance."

Ten Hypnotic Circles.

Though, according to Professor Rhys Davids, the constant change of posture in a Buddhist meditation makes trance impossible, the student is yet taught concentration by means of ten "hypnotic" circles. Moreover, in some meditations the aspirant is not supposed to vary his attitude, but is encouraged to assume what-

[1] Professor Rhys Davids, introd. to *The Yogāvacara's Manual*, p. x.

ever posture is most convenient, and to remain quietly in it. "That posture must be chosen which is most pleasant, whether it be walking, standing, sitting, or lying down; and in order that the priest may discover this, he must practise each of the positions during three days."[1]

The ten circles and the various "devices" for their use are probably used as a preliminary exercise in concentration. They are generally given as earth, water, fire, air, blue, yellow, red, space, light, white. For the "*earth device*" the student makes a lump of earth, and, holding it in his hand, concentrates attention on it. For the "*water device*" he meditates on water in a bowl. Here he is to consider that the perspiration and other watery particles of his body are of the same nature as that on which he looks. He must then think of and repeat the various names that are given to water by the people of the world. By this means he will arrive at the inferior illumination; as the imperfection of the water, such as that it is liable to be raised into waves, becomes apparent, he will attain the superior illumination. He meditates on *fire* in a similar way, reflecting that the fire in his own body is also flickering and inconstant. In order to practise the "*wind device*," the student must sit at the foot of a tree and meditate on the wind passing through a window, hole in the wall, or other aperture. When concentrating on the *blue circle*, he may consider flowers of a blue colour, a blue garment tied tightly over the mouth of a vessel, or a circle of blue painted on the wall. So, too, *golden* and *blood-red* may form the object of meditation. For the *circle of light* he may look at light streaming through a hole in the wall, a key-hole, or a window. Or he may procure an earthen vessel with a hole in its side, put a lamp inside, and let the light fall on the wall. This exercise is said to produce magical powers.

Unless these practices have symbolic meaning which

[1] *Cf.* R. Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, p. 257.

is unknown to me, they must be mere training in attention. It is difficult to understand, however, why a wide circle should be suited to a muddle-headed habit of mind, and a little one to an imaginative habit of mind, but so it is.

Intellectual Meditations.

A large number of the Buddhist meditations may be definitely classed as intellectual. The recluse, for instance, is told that he should constantly consider—

1. I am different from others.
2. I am dependent on others for a livelihood.
3. My mode of life must be different from others.
4. Are my dispositions such that I may not be reproached on account of my profession of virtue?
5. Shall I escape from censure respecting my profession of virtue when I am interrogated by the wise and holy?
6. I must be separated (by death) from all those whom I love and delight in.
7. I am the result of Karma, this forms my inheritance, my state of birth, my relatives, my support. I shall be the heir of the actions I perform, be they virtuous or wicked.
8. How do the days of my existence pass away?
9. Am I desirous of being in an empty house (for meditation)?
10. Do I possess the chief good of man? Have I attained to the clear perception of the most excellent knowledge? Shall I not be abashed when I am interrogated by my fellow-priests at the termination of my life?

Points of the Compass Meditation.

One of the most charming of Buddhist meditations is the following: The aspirant sits straight with his head erect, breathing deeply and slowly, facing in turn each of the points of the compass; he sends out, like

rays from a searchlight, thoughts of benevolence to all the sentient beings dwelling to south, west, north and east of him. Not only does he radiate thoughts of compassion and goodwill to men and animals on this earth, but also to gods above, and to devils imprisoned under the earth. "May all the superior orders of beings be happy," he thinks. "May they be free from sorrow, disease and evil desire; may all men, whether they be priests or laics, all the dewas, all who are suffering the pains of hell, be happy. May they be free from sorrow, disease and evil desire." "May the poor be relieved from their indigence and receive abundance. May the good fortune of the prosperous never pass away, may each one receive his own appointed reward."

In trying to scatter feelings of goodwill, the aspirant may, however, be disturbed by reflecting on his enemies. He is warned that he must overcome his resentment, and various means of accomplishing this end are suggested to him. For instance, he may consider that he will himself have to suffer pains if he hates his neighbour. This man whom he dislikes may have been his father or his son in a previous birth. He must consider that his enemy is much to be pitied, being subject, like the rest of mankind, to the evils of sickness, old age, and death. Should these devices fail, he must say to himself, "What is it in my enemy that I hate? Is it his hair? No, it is not. Is it his eyes? No, it is not," etc., until he has convinced himself that he cherishes no ill-will against his enemy. Finally, he may try doing him a favour or receiving a gift from him.

Meditation of Indifference.

A similar meditation may be practised, but with indifference taking the place of love or pity.

"All sentient beings are regarded as alike; one is not loved more than another. This exercise is superior to all the others, and is practised by the rahats."[1]

[1] R. Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, p. 249.

Meditation on Virtues.

The Buddhist may eliminate his faults by meditating on the virtues opposed to them. According to the Buddhist scheme of ideas, each virtue has two vices opposed to it, each of which may be corrected by meditation on the appropriate virtue. For instance, love has both vengeful conduct ("like an enemy lurking afar in the jungle and the hills") and its near enemy, lust, opposed to it. Therefore, both revenge and lust may be overcome by meditating on love. Similarly, pity has cruelty as its far-off foe, and self-pity, "the pining for what one has not got or has lost," opposed to it. And both cruelty and self-pity may be overcome by reflecting on the nature of true compassion.

Backwards Meditation.

One of the exercises most frequently recommended is the turning of the mind back, and the recalling, in the reverse order, of all that has been done or thought during the previous hour or day. The mere beginner is supposed to be able to call to mind, and to pass back in thought over, all the events of one or of two days. Later on the exercise is extended to cover weeks, months, and years. It is claimed that there are monks who have been able by persistent effort not only to return to the moment of their birth with full and complete consciousness, but to cross the streams of birth and death and to pass back into previous existences.

The power of reviving past impressions, which would seem certainly to be possessed by some Buddhists, tallies with the theory held by a good many Western psychologists that no impression made on the human brain is ever lost, and that it may be revived by appropriate stimulus. Hypnotism will often evoke memories which the conscious waking mind had completely forgotten, but which had been treasured by the subconscious. It is, of course, a commonplace of observation

on the part of all of us that a visit to scenes which we have not seen for many years will call to mind long-dormant memories of childhood. The Buddhists hold that the mind should be trained to have far more power over itself and its memories than is usually held to be possible in the West.

Backwards meditation would also seem to fulfil the same purpose as psycho-analysis. The Buddhist is aiming at complete philosophic calm. His mind needs to be undisturbed by suppressed emotions, passions driven into unlawful byways, festering secrets of the heart. To this end he brings all his thoughts, desires, inclinations out into the daylight, and subjects them to the cold light of reason; then, abandoning the delusion of the ego, he says, "This is worthless," and this and this, and rids himself of all emotional entanglement and bondage.

Moreover, as the devout Buddhist goes back over his past life he is able to reflect on his progress, and so to inspire himself to further detachment and calm.

Mahasipatthana: A Meditation for Eliminating the Ego.

It is difficult not to call this the "House-that-Jack-Built" meditation.

Pacing up and down in the courtyard of the monastery, in his cell, or in the wild and solitary spot that he has chosen for meditation, the aspirant repeats:

"There is the lifting of a foot.

"There is the feeling of a lifting of a foot.

"There is the perception of a feeling of a lifting of a foot.

"There is the tendency to a perception of a feeling of a lifting of a foot.

"There is the consciousness of a tendency to a perception of a feeling of a lifting of a foot."

Or again:

"There is the swinging of a hand.

"There is the feeling of a swinging of a hand," etc. Until the conclusion is reached that there is the lifting of a foot and the swinging of a hand, but no ego who feels, perceives, or acts.

Repetition of the Name of Buddha.

One of the most common of all Buddhist meditations, and one which should probably be classed as hypnotic, is the repetition of the name of the Buddha. In some sects this exercise is supposed to allow the devotee to participate in the merits of the Buddha, just as the Roman Catholic believer who invokes a saint shares in the stored-up merit of the holy man. By repeating the name of the Buddha, Chinese Buddhists believe that they gain entrance to the Western Heaven. The method of marking the number of repetitions is described by R. F. Johnston as follows:[1]

"Many of the crude woodcuts relating to . . . Buddha are starred with little circles. They are used for recording the number of times that the possessor of the picture has invoked Amitābha's name. When he completes a hundred (or a thousand) invocations, he takes a brush-pen, dips it in red ink, and fills in one of the circles. . . . If he perseveres in this proceeding for a few years his sheets of inked circles will reach the thickness of a book. . . . When at the point of death, he should cause them to be committed ceremonially to the flames. They will then become his spiritual passport to the Western Heaven."

Mr. Johnston also gives an account of a curious Japanese death ritual used among the Buddhists of the Amidist school.[2]

"Hōnen, one of the leaders of the Pure-Land school, taught that when a true believer in Amitābha is at the point of death his friends should put into his hands some parti-coloured threads, the other ends of which are to be fastened to one of the hands of an image or

[1] *Buddhist China*, p. 109. [2] Pp. 104, 105.

picture of Amitābha placed at the foot of the bed. Thus the dying gaze of the faithful Amidist is directed towards the radiant figure of the Lord Amitābha, just as the dying Catholic contemplates his crucified Saviour's image. . . . As the physical body of the dying Amidist is united by silken bonds to a material image of his Lord, so, it is taught, will the spirit when it is released from the flesh, be drawn by the divine Buddha . . . into communion with himself."

It is meditation, persevered in during a lifetime, that will enable the dying Buddhist to concentrate his attention on the Lord Amitābha. The devotee has himself, so it is taught, built the bridge of love and thought which will carry him right across the chasm of death to the bosom of the glorified Buddha.

Of all the Buddhist works which have been translated into English, the most important for our purpose is *The Yogāvachara's Manual*,[1] which contains complete information on all the Buddhist traditional meditations. To this book the student is referred. The whole of it would come within the scope of our inquiries, but it is obviously impossible to reproduce it *in extenso* here. The book is taken from a palm-leaf manuscript discovered some thirty years ago in the Temple of Bambara-galla in Ceylon. It is probably a work of the eighteenth century, but gives a very full account of traditional practices.

In the eighteenth century Buddhism in Ceylon was at a very low ebb. The Portuguese, with that lamentable disregard of native culture which so often has characterized Christian conquerors, had persecuted the Buddhist priests, destroyed the temples, and burned many priceless manuscripts. The religion of the people languished, monasteries were left in ruins, and the few priests who remained became idle and corrupt.

[1] *The Manual of a Mystic* (being a translation from the Pali and Singalese work entitled *The Yogāvachara's Manual*), by F. L. Woodward (Pali Text Society), Introd. Mrs. Rhys Davids.

Presently, however, there arose a reformer, Saraṇaṅkara by name. He belonged to a noble family, and was destined for the King's service, but had no love for worldly distinction. In his sixteenth year he entered the Buddhist Order as a novice. There the full corruption of the priesthood was revealed to him, the utter irreligion of those who should be the country's spiritual leaders. Saraṇaṅkara took a vow to devote himself to the reformation of the Order and the evangelization of Ceylon. Gathering disciples round him, he journeyed far and wide, preaching to the people, helping them with his own hands to rebuild their temples, teaching them to care for the few books which remained to them, and inspiring them to love learning once more.

After some time he came to understand that the spiritual condition of the Order was so bad that help must be called in from outside before complete reform was possible, and before the ancient art of meditation could be restored to its proper place. He had found pupils in plenty, but teachers he must have. In those days it was no easy matter to discover where the pure doctrine of Gotama was still taught and his meditations practised. Finally, however, Saraṇaṅkara heard that wise and virtuous Bhikshus might be obtained from Siam. After many difficulties he succeeded in despatching an embassy to Siam. It reached the country safely and was received with honour, but the Siamese king would not venture to trust any of his priests to the dangers of far-off Ceylon. Saraṇaṅkara determined to send another mission, and this time five chiefs arrived with their petition at the Siamese Court. They returned with a number of priests, and, after suffering shipwreck and many hardships, landed in Ceylon at last. Two or three years later a further deputation of Siamese Bhikshus came to Ceylon, including some who were specially trained in the art of meditation. The language used by the Siamese in instructing their pupils was Pali. Thus it is that *The Yogāvachara's Manual* was written in Pali with a Sinhalese translation.

According to Mr. Woodward's preface, the practice of yoga has now died out in Ceylon. He gives the following account of the last priest in the island to whom the Yogāvachara tradition was known.[1]

"The Bhikkhu Doratiyāveye, Thera, was incumbent of the Hangurangketa Wihāra in the western province of Ceylon, and was living as recently as 1900. He came by the knowledge of the system in the following way: His guru, then an aged monk, one day ordered all his resident pupils to come and kneel before him in the court of the Wihāra. He then left them, shut himself up in his cell and, they supposed, went to sleep for an hour or more. On coming out again, he found that all his pupils had disappeared except the said Doratiyāveye, who had remained kneeling during the whole time of his teacher's absence. Questioned as to why he, too, had not gone away, he replied: 'You did not order me to go.' The elder was well pleased with him, and, sending for the other pupils, asked them why they had departed without permission. 'We thought you were asleep,' they replied. 'No!' said the guru; 'it was a test to see which of you was worthy to receive the ancient secrets which have been handed down to me, the secrets of paramparā yoga (traditional secret meditation handed down by word of mouth from guru to sisya).'

"He then sent the others away, and instructed his chosen disciple in the system, and not long after passed away. The disciple, it is said, did not practise the system himself, and the reason for this is rather quaint. People said he was a Bodhisattva, and, as such, destined for many more births on earth. Now, had he practised the process with success, he would have entered on the Path. Having done so, he was bound, according to the teaching of Buddha, to attain Arahatship in his seventh subsequent birth, and would thus pass away for ever and could not be Bodhisattva. . . . Be this as it may, the elder was content to teach the

[1] Prefatory Note, xviii.

practice to one of his pupils, who went mad and died; which would probably happen unless the guru himself were fully versed in the methods and able to see clairvoyantly exactly what effect each meditation was having on his pupil. There is no one now, as far as I know, in Ceylon, who either knows or practises these strenuous exercises."

"The Yogāvachara's Manual" opens with a Preamble.

The priest[1] "who has truly felt the dread of the stream of becoming goes to a solitary forest, to the foot of a tree, or to a lonely place far from the haunts of men." There he sits cross-legged, attends to his breathing according to instructions, fixes his eyes on the tip of his nose, and pronounces the word "Arahan." This word symbolizes the Law, the Buddha, and the Order, for in these three he must put his trust. While meditating, the priest will use one of the "artifices" or "devices" to which reference has been made above,[2] and visualize the image of the device. As the meditation proceeds, an "after-image" arises in the priest's mind, "like a mirror drawn from its case, like a conch-shell scoured clean, like the moon as he slips from the clouds, or like a flock of cranes before dark clouds."[3] After this the Element of Extension—which would seem to be the abstract idea of the object the aspirant is considering—appears. Then follows ecstasy "as the light of the firefly, self-lit by day and night."

These feelings are to be grasped by the mind, and symbolically fixed in the heart or navel.

The foregoing would seem to be a general description of the procedure of meditation. More detailed instructions follow.

Invocation.

The priest is taught to invoke not only Gotama the Buddha, but other Buddhas and hidden Buddhas. So,

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 1. [2] P. 83. [3] *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

too, the Catholic invokes, not only Jesus Christ, but Mary and the saints.

Meditation on the Fivefold Rapture, etc.

In the meditation for rapture or ecstasy the mode of procedure would seem to consist again of preamble, access and ecstasy. The posture is continually changed, the image, after-image and abstract idea are again present to the mind, the idea, "like the blue light of the taper," is in imagination taken from the tip of the nose to the navel. The aspirant strives for "the lesser thrill, the momentary flash, the flooding rapture, the transporting rapture, the all-pervading rapture."

Of this joy, "pīti," felt in meditation, Mrs. Rhys Davids writes:[1]

"It is a complex psychical phenomenon, implying a 'central psycho-physical origin,' and a widely diffused 'somatic resonance.' It arises out of a present idea and suffuses the whole being. In Buddhaghosas's day it was divided into five species:

1. The thrill of joy, just causing the 'flesh to creep.'
2. The flash of joy, like lightning.
3. The flood of joy, like breakers on the seashore.
4. Ecstasy or transport, in which the subject could float through the air.
5. Overwhelming suffusing joy."

Candle Meditation.

Meditation on the five kinds of rapture is also carried out in the following fashion:

The aspirant divides a candle into eight portions by bits of wood stuck into the candle at intervals of about one inch or two inches. Adopting the posture of meditation, he concentrates his mind on "the lesser thrill," until the element of extension appears to him, and con-

[1] *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics* (the Dhamma-Sangani, Compendium of States), pp. 11, 12 note.

tinues meditating thereon until the noise of the stick falling from the candle reminds him to change his attitude and pass on to the consideration of the second kind of rapture. When he has meditated on each of the five raptures in turn, locating them in some part of his body according to the usual curious procedure, he goes back over them in the reverse order, concluding his meditation when the last bit of wood has fallen from the candle. It seems strange that this meditation, which is designed to produce ecstasy—*i.e.*, a state of mind often accompanied by trance—should depend for its correct fulfilment on the aspirant being capable of giving attention to such an insignificant external sound as the falling down from the candle of a tiny bit of wood. However, the frequency of the change of posture makes it obvious that no trance can be possible. The priest, even when experiencing the fivefold joy, must be in full possession of his faculties.

Meditation on the Six Pairs.

After the same manner the monk should meditate on—

Repose of mental factors.
Repose of mind.
Buoyancy of mental factors.
Buoyancy of mind.
Plasticity of mental factors.
Plasticity of mind.
Wieldiness of mental factors.
Wieldiness of mind.
Fitness of mental factors.
Fitness of mind.
Rectitude of mental factors.
Rectitude of mind.

These meditations appear to me rather obscure. How I wish I could meet someone who had actually attempted them according to the traditional instructions!

Meditation on the Ten Foul Things.

When the aspirant has mastered various other complicated exercises, including breathing-meditation and the ten "artifices" or "devices," he may proceed to consider—

1. The swollen corpse.
2. The discoloured corpse.
3. The festering corpse.
4. The fissured corpse.
5. The mangled corpse.
6. The dismembered corpse.
7. The limb-scattered corpse.
8. The bloody corpse.
9. The worm-foul corpse.
10. The skeleton.

Each of these is described with terse vividness of detail, that the image of horror may be clearly present to the monk's eyes.

Meditation on the Bodily Parts.

Following this the aspirant may meditate on the parts of the body—thirty in all—probably in order to say to himself that there is no ego contained in them. So, too, he may meditate on the loathsomeness of food.

Other Meditations.

More beautiful are meditations on Perfect Peace, Good Conduct, Freedom, the Immaterial Realms, Equanimity, the Forms of Knowledge, etc.

It is to be noticed that, though all these meditations appear to be of the "intellectual" type, it would seem to be possible to attain to ecstasy through their use. I am considerably puzzled to see how a mind, however detached, however convinced of the non-existence of the ego, however well-trained in concentra-

tion, can be moved to rapture by considering the hair of the head, or the loathsomeness of food.

Poetical Similes.

The Manual of a Mystic is interspersed with curious and poetical similes. Unfortunately their exact meaning is very obscure. Ecstasy may be spoken of as "white as purest cotton flowers or white lotus," "like jessamine flowers," and the like. The preamble may be like "a sheaf of feathers from a peacock's tail or a peacock's plumage," the access "dark, and black as a beetle."

Of the jhanas, or raptures, the ecstasies are said to be like the fire-fly, the halo of the moon, the colour of the medicine star, the halo of the sun, and white flowers.

Mental states are evidently conceived as having colour, or as being connected with a particular colour. Whether the colour belonging to each degree of ecstasy is supposed to be the colour of the light (called by the Hindus "Sarasvati") seen at the moment of rapture, or is a tint symbolically associated with a certain stage of spiritual development, it is difficult to say.

Exercise for Mental Clarity.[1]

Here are some strange instructions given to the man who would perform the breathing exercise for mental clarity.

"When the aspirant who meditates to destroy the thick darkness of the passions of lust, illusions, and the like, by the sunlight of wisdom, has thus meditated on the concentration by inbreathing and outbreathing, entering the threshold of the mind, the element of space appears.

"Well observing its three thought-forms, let him develop them by following the ten rules. Of these the way of observing the last is this: Let him withdraw from

[1] *The Yogāvachara's Manual,* pp. 68, 69.

the tip of his nose the three thought-forms, observe them well, inch by inch, and let the line of observation be extended for twelve inches or a span. Then let it be expanded for two spans or a cubit. Thereupon it looks like a string of pearls of divers hues, or else like a wreath of flowers. When it has reached the length of seven carpenter's cubits it becomes a pole. When it has reached twenty poles it becomes a cast. When it has reached a hundred or a thousand leagues it seems like the ocean. When it has reached still further, he sees in thought the Seven Great Rocks, and further still the Peak of Mount Meru. Let him form an image of them and fix their three thought-forms in the way of right succession."

When the seer has practised this exercise in reverse order he "should see the Six Heavens—first, the Heaven of the four Great Rulers, then the sixteen Brahma worlds, and then Endless Space."

"In the downward way, let him observe the Dry-Land, four million measures wide; the Sea, four hundred and eighty thousand; the Atmosphere, nine hundred and sixty thousand."

Evidently some kind of expansion of consciousness is aimed at in this exercise, possibly that synthesis of the consciousnesses of all living beings which the seer covets, and which is known as Universal Consciousness.

At the end of *Yogāvachara's Manual* is written:

> "May I become an all-surpassing Buddha.
> May all that I desire be accomplished;
> May beauty be mine and health."

Results of Meditation.

Each religion may be said to have its characteristic spiritual experience. For the Christian the supreme experience is communion with Jesus Christ. The Catholic may group his experiences round the Eucharist, the Evangelical connect them with the atoning blood of

Jesus, but the essential feeling of personal intercourse with a living Saviour will be the same.

The characteristic Buddhist experience is that of *Release*. His awakening has come by way of considering the inevitable sorrows of human existence, the pain of separation from loved ones, the hardships of daily life, the normal irremediable tragedies of old age, sickness and death. The Christian who has become an adept in communion with Christ has learnt a joyful acceptance of life as it is, finding in pain the raw material for joy. Not so the Buddhist. To him an emotional contact with the spirit of the departed Gotama would seem a concession to the weakness of his nature, and any experience which would irradiate life and make it beautiful a hopeless delusion. No soft glow must be cast on the stark ugliness of the life of men living in the mistaken belief that they are separate egos. Just as a modern Bolshevist or Communist resents any attempt to point out that the daily existence of the wage-earner may not be as miserable as he likes to represent, so the orthodox Buddhist must object to any experience or view of life which makes the existence of separate personalities or individualities tolerable.[1] The happiness felt by the "individual" when he has realized that his individuality is an illusion, and when he has learned to expand his consciousness to participate in the consciousness of the Whole, is so enormous and valuable that the Buddhist considers himself fully justified in condemning all ordinary ego-existence as tainted with sorrow.

The sensation, then, of emerging from a narrow prison life of the ego mode of being, into the consciousness of the Arahat, is the most characteristic Buddhist experience. Some writers describe it as a progress from a dark and gloomy valley covered by miasmic mists to a glorious mountain-top bathed in the light of the sun. Others as the emerging of a butterfly from a chrysalis. Others, again, as the gift of sight to one long blind.

[1] I need hardly say that the majority of Buddhists can scarcely be orthodox in this respect.

The idea, however, is always the same—release from a sorrowful life caused by the delusion of the ego to the full, free life of the understanding of the Truth. Personal communion with Gotama may be said to count for very little, though there are cases where a vision of Gotama was the means of the aspirant entering the Path. The discovery of the "Buddha within," to which reference has been made, has no connection with the historic Gotama. The inward Buddha is the expanded mode of consciousness which produces freedom from sorrow, the "going out" of desire; in a word, Nirvana itself.

Accounts of Religious Experience.

The lives of Christian saints are full of accounts of religious experiences, all more or less interesting to the psychologist. That Buddhist holy men and women must have been equally favoured with visions, raptures and the like, may be gathered from the fact that Buddhist ecstasies have been classified from very early times. Obviously no classification could have been made until a large number of cases had come under consideration. As far as I am aware, however, there are not accessible in English any detailed accounts of Buddhist spiritual experiences. A few sentences, speaking of the delight of the Jhānas, comparisons of the sensations experienced to perception of light, etc., are all that I have been able to collect. If mystics of other religions have considered it both their duty and their delight to set down some account of their experiences, surely Buddhist mystics must have done the same. I should be most grateful for any information on this subject.

Classification of Spiritual Experiences

The Four Jhānas.

I take from the *Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics* an account of the four Jhānas, or raptures, as induced by the use of the "earth artifice."

"When that he may attain to the heavens of Form, he cultivates the way thereto, aloof from sensuous appetites, aloof from evil ideas, and so, by earth-gazing enters and abides in the First Jhāna, wherein conception works and thought discursive, which is born of solitude and full of joy and ease."[1]

In this *First Jhāna* nothing that we are accustomed to connect with the word "rapture" would seem to have taken place. All that the aspirant seems to experience is an easy and delightful working of the mind on the subject chosen, with a heightening of interest and a feeling of expectation of better things to come. He has not yet, as far as I can see, reached the stage which the Catholics call the Prayer of Quiet, or the Prayer of Simple Regard. He is free from distractions, with his mind concentrated on his task, but nothing much has happened.

Before attempting to proceed to the *Second Jhāna*, by whatever way he has chosen, the aspirant will do well to meditate on the imperfections and comparative coarseness of the First Jhāna. He then proceeds.

"When suppressing the working of conception and of thought discursive, and so, by earth-gazing, enters into and abides in the Second Jhāna, which is self-evolved, born of concentration, full of joy and ease . . . the mind grows calm and sure, dwelling on high."[2]

Here we have a further stage. The mind gradually grows more still, earth and its preoccupations become remote and take on a strange unreality. Sometimes there may even be the sensation of the aspirant's body being suspended in space, with abysses of stars above and below, remote from the haunts of men. The mind, still self-conscious, grows sure of itself, and progresses with a sure step. Concentration is intense, and great joy and peace accompany it.

The *Third Jhāna* may now be attempted.

"When, further, through the waning of all passion

[1] Pp. 43, 44. [2] Pp. 45, 46.

for joy, he holds himself unbiassed (disinterested) the while, mindful and self-possessed, he experiences in his sense-consciousness that ease whereof the Noble Ones declare 'He that is unbiassed and watchful dwelleth at ease,' and so enters and abides in the Third Jhāna."[1]

In the *Third Jhāna* the seer is making definite progress in the elimination of the ego-consciousness. The first step is the rising above the delight which he takes in the rapture of meditation. He ceases to say to himself as he meditates: "I am experiencing calm, I am conscious of delight."

He continues his meditation, reaching the *Fourth Jhāna.*

"When, by putting away of ease, and putting away of ill, by the passing away of the happiness and of the misery he was wont to feel, he enters and abides in the Fourth Jhāna, of that utter purity of mindfulness which comes of disinterestedness."[2]

At this stage the seer has entirely ceased to be conscious of happiness or hindrances as applied to himself. He is in a condition of pure spiritual receptiveness, which would seem to be akin to the state of the Christian who is not asking "gifts" of God, but seeking to commune with Pure Spirit Itself. It is exceedingly difficult to add anything more to the description of the state which is called "utter purity of mindfulness." This description would seem to convey, as well as words can, something of the extreme purity and limpidity of the mood.

Childers, quoted by Kern,[3] gives the following account of the experience of the four Jhānas.

"The priest concentrates his mind upon a single thought. Gradually his soul becomes filled with a supernatural ecstasy and serenity, while his mind still reasons upon and investigates the subject chosen for contemplation; this is the First Jhāna. Still fixing his thoughts upon the same subject, he then frees his mind from reasoning and investigation, while the ecstasy and

[1] P. 48. [2] P. 50. [3] *Manual of Indian Buddhism,* p. 56.

serenity remain, and this is the second Jhána. Next, his thoughts still fixed as before, he divests himself of ecstasy and attains the third Jhána, which is a state of tranquil serenity. Lastly, he passes to the fourth Jhána, in which the mind, exalted and purified, is indifferent to all emotions alike of pleasure and pain."

Subdivisions of the Jhānas.

The Jhānas may further be subdivided on the following plan:

1. The First Jhāna may be limited, with a limited object of thought.
2. The First Jhāna may be limited, but have an object of thought capable of infinite extension.
3. The First Jhāna may be capable of infinite extension, but have a limited object of thought.
4. Both the Jhāna and the object of thought may be capable of infinite extension.

Progress of the Pupil.

Progress of the pupil is said to depend on whether the preparatory abstraction of the object of thought was easy or difficult, and whether the constructive generalizing effort was sluggish or vigorous. These depend on his moral temperament and mental ability. The swiftness of intuition depends on the acuteness of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. Ease or difficulty of abstraction depends on whether the pupil is governed by sattvas, rajas, or tamas. (Variously translated; may be rendered "spirituality," "intellect," or "sensuality.")

The pupil needs, then, good intellect and morals, power of concentrating the attention, power of abstraction and generalization, understanding of the meaning behind symbols, capacity for self-forgetfulness and a mind that lies open to spiritual influences.

The practice of Jhāna with ecstasy, says a modern

writer, Shwe Zan Aung, is, in the majority of cases, attended with the greatest of difficulties, and is known as the Distressful Path.[1] Attainment in the first Jhāna, however, is potent enough to annihilate the Five Hindrances—viz., sloth and torpor, doubt, aversion, distraction, worry.

So the Distressful Path has its immediate rewards.

Attainment in Jhāna.

Shwe Zan Aung writes enthusiastically of attainment in Jhāna. After he has described the First Jhāna as follows, "There is at first a dull sense of interest, growing keener and keener, through oscillating interest, into an intense interest amounting to thrilling emotion, followed, finally, by interest amounting to rapture. This diffused rapture is invariably followed by a pleasurable, easeful, happy feeling, by which distraction and worry are inhibited." He continues: "Attainment in Jhāna is a very important psychological moment, marking an epoch in the student's mental experience. He has, for the first time in his life, tasted something unlike anything he has ever experienced before. The feeling is simply indescribable. He feels an entirely changed person, purged from the Hindrances. He lives a new, higher life, the life of a god of the heavens called Rūpa; experiencing the consciousness believed to be habitual to those dwelling there."[2]

We also have a description of the Jhānas given by Mrs. Rhys Davids in the introduction to *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics*.[3]

". . . Jhāna, or rapt contemplation, the psychology of which, when adequately investigated, will one day evoke considerable interest. There was first intense attention, by way of 'an exclusive sensation,' to be entered upon only when all other activity was relaxed to the utmost, short of checking in any way the higher mental functions. After a time the sensation practically

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 55. [2] Pp. 56-57. [3] P. lxxxviii.

ceases. The wearied sense goes out. Change, indispensable to consciousness, has been eliminated. . . . Then comes the play of the 'after-image,' and then the emergence of the mental image, of purely ideational or representative construction. This will be not of the sense-object first considered, but some attenuated abstraction of one of its qualities. And this serves as a background and as a barrier against all further invasion of sense-impressions for the time being. To him thus purged and prepared there comes, through subconscious persistence, a *reinstatement* of some concept associated with feeling and conation, which he had selected for preliminary meditation. And this conception he now proceeds, by a sort of psychical involution, to raise to a higher power, realizing it more fully, deepening its import, expanding its application."

It is difficult for a Christian, accustomed to connect rapture or ecstasy with intercourse with God as manifested in Jesus Christ, to understand how these curious intellectual abstractions can produce spiritual delights. Modern Far Eastern Buddhists, in an outline of doctrine prepared by Mr. S. Kuroda,[1] and said to be approved by several influential Buddhist communions in Japan (published at Tokyo in 1893), explain, however, that in Jhāna the aspirant is in contact with "Essence of Mind," which would seem to be what we should call Pure Spirit. This Essence of Mind is said to pervade all things and to be pure and unchanging. Stress is also laid on the need of realizing the Buddha within, by means of Jhāna. "Buddha," runs a Chinese saying, "is simply a condition of mind." Again: "A Buddhist kingdom has no outward manifestation. It is a pure and holy condition of mind."

I find in a note to *The Diamond Sutra*,[2] which is considered to be the book of Buddhist initiates, the following: "The word 'Buddha' seems to convey to

[1] *Outlines of the Mahâyâna*, pp. 20, 22.
[2] P. 73 note.

devout Buddhist minds a meaning consonant with the ethical idea of Love, as understood generally by the followers of Christ. Within it are potential spiritual elements which, according to their judgment, perfectly fulfil the law."

Is it possible, then, to explain the Buddhist ecstasy otherwise than by assuming that the aspirant, by freeing his mind from distractions and evil thoughts, does indeed commune with pure spirit, and by so doing realizes his capacity for breathing a higher spiritual atmosphere than that of normal selfish preoccupations? To have forgotten, even for a few moments, the ego and its clamorous desires, to have rested for the briefest moment, it may be, in the Eternal, is to have given the soul a freedom and a nobility previously unknown. The moral results of having attained to Jhāna are said, moreover, to be immediately apparent. Peace and joy, an absence of self-seeking, a destruction of the cleaving to existence, equanimity in the face of the sorrows of life, compassion for the troubles of others, and a desire to instruct other men in the Path—these are said to be the shining fruits of ecstasy.

The Four Aruppas.

When the seeker has become proficient in the Jhānas, he may proceed to the cultivation of the four Aruppas. These are described as follows:[1]

1. *The Sphere of Unbounded Space.*—"That he may attain to the Formless heavens, he cultivates the way thereto, and so, by passing wholly beyond all consciousness of form, by the dying out of the consciousness of sensory reaction (*i.e.*, by being oblivious of the world of sights and sounds, etc.), by turning the attention from any consciousness of the manifold, he enters into and abides in that rapt meditation which is accompanied by the consciousness of a sphere of unbounded space."

[1] *Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics*, p. 72.

The step from the Jhānas to the Aruppas would appear to be similar to that known by Christian mystics as the progress from Meditation to Contemplation. A definite expansion of consciousness here takes place, which is described symbolically as a sphere of infinite or unbounded space. It is possible, however, that the expanding consciousness seems actually to take note of space and to apprehend that space as infinite.

2. *The Second Aruppa.*—This state is accompanied by the consciousness of a sphere of infinite intellection.[1] Here, I imagine, the mind reaches a state where it feels that all knowledge is open to it; not knowledge conceived as a succession of details, but rather as an immediate intuition of a whole.

3. *The Third Aruppa.*—This is accompanied by the consciousness of a sphere of nothingness.[2] Here the ego-consciousness is completely eliminated. Words can obviously not be found to give any adequate expression of this state of mind.

4. *The Fourth Aruppa.*—Here the aspirant reaches the stage where "there is neither perception nor non-perception."[3] Now, I confess myself unable to follow him, nor can I give any idea of what sensations are experienced in the Fourth Aruppa.

Gotama is said to have passed even beyond this stage, being in this respect, so his followers claim, ahead of the rest of humanity.

Perhaps we shall more easily understand the nature of Buddhist experiences if we study the spiritual adventures of a mystic who, though reared in a Christian environment, had little communion with a personal God or Saviour. Such a man was Henri Frédéric Amiel. His experiences seem more easily classified under Buddhist than Christian categories. I quote from his *Journal Intime*:[4]

"Quoique debout, je n'avais plus de poids ni de corps; je me sentis globe, et tournant dans l'espace

[1] *Op. cit.*, p 73. [2] P. 74. [3] P. 74.
[4] *Fragments* ed. par. E. Sherer, xxxviii.

comme une planète; je me sentis distinctement *en dedans* de mon organisme, affranchi de lui."

And again:[1] "Je ne trouve aucune voix pour ce que j'éprouve. Un recueillement profond se fait en moi; j'entends battre mon cœur et passer ma vie. Il me semble que je suis devenu une statue sur les bords du fleuve du temps, que j'assiste à quelque mystère d'où je vais sortir vieux ou sans âge. . . . Je me sens anonyme, impersonnel, l'œil fixe comme un mort, l'esprit vague et universel comme le néant ou l'absolu; je suis en suspens, je suis comme n'étant pas. Dans ces moments il me semble que ma conscience se retire dans son éternité; elle regarde circuler au dedans d'elle ses astres et sa nature, avec ses saisons et ses myriades de choses individuelles; elle s'aperçoit dans sa substance même, supérieure à toute forme, contenant son passé, son présent et son avenir, vide qui renferme tout, milieu invisible et fécond, virtualité d'un monde qui se dégage de sa propre existence pour se resaisir dans son intimité pure. . . . Tout s'efface, se dissout, se détend, se replonge dans la fluidité originelle, sans figure, sans angle, sans dessin arrêté. Cet état est contemplation et non stupeur; il est ni douloureux, ni joyeux, ni triste; il est en dehors de tout sentiment spécial comme de toute pensée finie. Il est la conscience de l'être et la conscience de l'omnipossibilité latente au fond de cet être. C'est la sensation de l'infini spiritual."

Here is another quotation which seems to me to express what a Buddhist feels when he has reached a state entering on Nirvana:[2]

"La vie individuelle est un néant qui s'ignore, et aussitôt que ce néant se connaît, la vie individuelle est abolie en principe. Sitot l'illusion évanouie, le néant reprend son rôle éternal, la souffrance de la vie est terminée, l'erreur est disparue, le temps et la forme ont cessé d'être pour cet individualité affranchie; la bulle d'air colorée a crevé dans l'espace infini, et la misère de la pensée s'est dissoute dans l'immuable repos du Rien

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. xli. [2] P. xliii.

illimité. L'absolu, s'il était esprit, serait encore activité, et c'est l'activité, fille du désire qui est incompatible avec l'absolu. L'absolu doit être le Zéro de toute détermination, et la seule manière d'être qui lui convienne, c'est le Néant."

In less austere mood, Amiel exclaims:

"J'ai parcouru l'univers, du plus profond de l'empyrée jusqu'au mouvements peristaltiques des atomes dans la cellule élementaire; je me suis dilaté dans l'infini, affranchi en esprit du temps et de l'espace, en ramenant la création sans bornes au point sans dimensions et en voyant la multitude de soleils, voies lactées, étoiles et nébuleuses, dans le point. Et de tous les côtés, mystères, merveilles, prodiges, s'étendaient sans limite, sans nombre et sans fond. J'ai senti vivre en moi cette insondable pensée, j'ai touché, éprouvé, savouré, embrassé mon néant et mon immensité, j'ai baisé le bord des vêtements de Dieu, et je lui ai rendu grâce d'être esprit et d'être vie. Ces moments sont les entrevues divines où l'on prend conscience de son immortalité, et où l'on adore dans la stupeur de l'extase, et l'humilité ardente de l'amour. . . . Comme l'unité de toute chose m'est présente sensible, intérieure!"

I take from my manuscript collection the following account of a spiritual experience which came as the direct result of meditation. It seems to me far more Buddhist than Christian in character:

"The first step was to get beyond the embodied ego. I cannot describe how I did it, beyond saying that I willed the consciousness of my body to cease. The result was that I seemed to contract towards the centre of my body. Then came a point when I ceased to will to shut out impressions. There was a sudden cessation of tension, and I seemed to get bigger, though in a curious spaceless way. I was not *here* or *there;* I just *was*. I was not conscious of space, yet somehow I seemed pervasive. I felt calm and changeless. Then came an experience of sundering, of being brought back. For the first few minutes after coming back I was tired from the

final struggle. The mental calm lasted for some hours."

This experience would not appear to take the aspirant beyond the "first Jhāna." Those of Amiel are of a much higher type, but they obviously belong to the same series of experiences. More than one Christian saint who has been glad to make use of such expressions as "the divine dark," "the cloud of unknowing," probably had similar spaceless impersonal experiences. His instinctive wish, however, to reach out to something warmer and more personal would prevent him from resting calmly in these sensations. He believed in the personality of God, even if he could only apprehend the Divine in dark negative.

Nirvana.

The goal of the Buddhist is, of course, Nirvana. But what exactly *is* Nirvana? Before Buddhist sacred texts were as well known to Western scholars as they are now, Nirvana was generally understood by Christian writers to be equivalent to annihilation. The Buddhist wished to escape from the round of rebirths. Continuance of life arose out of desire. When desire ceases, annihilation takes place. Mr. Gogerly, writing of Hinayana Buddhism, says:[1]

"The nature of Nirvana is obvious. It is not the destruction of an existent being, but the cessation of existence. . . . It is not absorption into a Superior Being, as the Brahmins teach; it is not a retreat to a place of eternal repose free from transmigration, called the 'Hall of Glory,' or any other name . . . but it is a complete and final cessation of existence. According to this, Buddha (the man Gotama) is no more; he is inexistent. . . . The correctness of this statement is indubitable."

Now the opinion of scholars has so far changed that Dr. E. J. Thomas writes: "For the Buddhist it [Nirvana] is the extinction of craving, of the desire for

[1] *Ceylon Buddhism*, p. 10.

existence in all its forms, and the consequent cessation of pain. . . . *It is unnecessary to discuss the view that Nirvana means the extinction of the individual.* No such view has ever been supported from the texts, and there is abundant evidence as to its real meaning, the extinction of craving in this life, as Rhys Davids has always insisted."[1]

Speaking of Mahayana Buddhism, William Gemmell says:[2]

"By adopting the term 'Mieh-Tu,' Chinese Buddhists appear well prepared to refute a prevalent notion that their concept of deliverance is equivalent to annihilation." A suggested English rendering is "deliverance" or "salvation."

Professor de la Vallée Poussin suggests[3] that the Buddhists themselves are not always quite clear in their minds as to the meaning that should be attached to the word Nirvana. He considers three alternatives.

1. Nirvana meaning not only deliverance, but annihilation. This, he says, is the *logical* but not the *intentional* result of Gotama's teaching. He taught that desire causes existence. When the saint has destroyed desire in his wish to reach Nirvana, *logically* he will have destroyed existence. Normally, however, Buddhists shrank from this implication.

2. The conception of Nirvana as a transcendental state. "Every phrase that the Brāhmans use to describe the fortunate merging of the individual self into the absolute self is or may be used by the Buddhists to describe the deliverance." Many Buddhists believe in a blissful Nirvana-state after death, but this is heretical.

3. That the Buddha refused to state definitely what Nirvana meant. He preached deliverance and pointed out the way to deliverance. The exact nature of that

[1] *The Life of Buddha*, p. 187.

[2] *The Diamond Sutra* (Chin-Kang-Ching or Prajnā Paramita), trans. from the Chinese by William Gemmell. Note p. 10.

[3] *Encycl. of Rel. and Eth.*

deliverance he left to his followers to find out for themselves.

Professor de la Vallée Poussin suggests that there are, perhaps, *two* Nirvanas—a here-and-now earthly Nirvana, which is a serene and detached frame of mind, and a Nirvana after death, the nature of which cannot, in the nature of the case, be known. This is the conclusion which I had come to before I had read his article.

"*Nirvana*," said a Buddhist monk to me, "*is Reality*. . . . It may be tenable that Nirvana means annihilation, but how then would Buddhism have spread? What attraction could there be to men in a religion which merely promised suicide of the most final and complete kind? Gotama taught that in Nirvana there was 'neither existence nor non-existence'—*i.e.*, that there was existence in an entirely new form, with a different mode of consciousness. A foretaste of our ultimate manner of consciousness is gained in meditation. Nirvana in this life means the 'going out of desire,' the serene, passionless calm of the Arahat."

Nirvana, then, would seem to mean two things. It may, first of all, refer to the habitual state of mind to which the Buddhist wishes to attain in this life, a state where he is above joy and sorrow, selfless, disinterested, his mind fixed on eternity. Secondly, Nirvana may refer to the mode of consciousness which will be enjoyed by the finally beatified spirits in their ultimate state. Of this little can be said except that the Arahat has some inkling of this consciousness when he rises through the four Jhānas and reaches the Aruppas. He then has not an individual consciousness, but a universal, all-pervasive consciousness, complete and passionless, without subject or object.

So-called "Magical Powers."

Mention must here be briefly made of a certain by-product of meditation—namely, the so-called "magical powers" of the Buddhist saint. In developing in him-

self unusual powers of mental concentration and of consciousness the aspirant also finds that his psychic powers develop, and that his mastery over the physical world increases. These powers are naturally a source of great interest and wonder to the ignorant crowd of his followers. Stories of his wonderful doings, passed from lip to lip, form the material of pious legend and superstition. Tales of marvels lose, of course, nothing in the telling. The saint heals one man; he is credited with the cure of a hundred. He reads the thoughts of a penitent; it is believed that no secrets can be hidden from him. As he preaches, his face glows with enthusiasm; his followers, on fire with his eloquence, see light radiating from his person. The sceptic, examining the evidence, or disbelieving on *à priori* grounds, finds that ninety-nine miracles are false, and neglects the hundredth case where the occurrence was truly reported. If we also argue on *à priori* grounds, it is not unlikely that a man developing unusual powers in himself may acquire unusual influence over other men and things. Evidence seems to support this theory. "Miracles" are often strikingly well attested. It is, on the whole, easier to explain them than to explain them away. To do the former is not also to do the latter.

The Buddhist list of magical powers given to the Arahat is as follows:

1. Science, art, hypnotism (classified as "power acquired by knowledge.").
2. The flying power of birds, the power of spirits and of gods.
3. The power of looking upon agreeable objects as disagreeable, and *vice versa*.
4. The power induced by concentration of resisting pain, death, etc.
5. The same, induced by insight.
6. The power of creating phenomena outside one's own body; for instance, multiplying loaves and fishes.
7. The power of transforming one's body into different personalities.

8. The power of creating one's double.
9. The Celestial Eye (clairvoyance).
10. The Celestial Ear (clairaudience).
11. Discerning others' thoughts.
12. Remembrance of previous lives.

To these may be added the power of prolonged fasting and the ability to induce a cataleptic condition of body by Jhāna.

The seeker is warned that if he wishes to make good progress along the Path he must beware of being delayed by these powers. Any vain display of them, in order to win the admiration of the open-mouthed crowd, is fatal to progress. Any complacency at their possession, any feeling of superiority over other men not so endowed, will be a terrible hindrance to him. The aspirant must use them, as it were, only accidentally and casually, never to provoke wonder or even to enforce teaching, but only when moved by compassion. Buddhist saints would certainly seem to have been more guarded than others in the display of their powers, though legends of fantastic miracles wrought by Gotama still survive. Mohammedan holy men, for instance, would appear, if the legends are to be believed, to have been only too fond of showing off their capabilities and gaining blatant victories over the unbelieving. Buddhist teaching on the subject of these strange powers is of a piece with the balanced and moderate Buddhist view of life.

CHAPTER IV

MOHAMMEDANISM

The Mohammedan Character.

THE Mohammedan of one's imagination is not meditative. It is easy to think of the meditative Hindu, or of a Buddhist seated cross-legged for devout exercises. The Mohammedan, however, appears across the stage of one's mind mounted on a war-horse, riding forth to offer conquered nations the tribute or the sword. In religion he would seem to be a formalist, an observer of fasts and of prayer-times, but a man wanting in spirituality. He can defend the honour of God with the proud energy of the cavalier, and resign himself to death with a quietly heroic "Kismet!" but surely he is no mystic. He does not live in a world where material things are the shadow, and spiritual realities the substance. Even his Paradise, peopled with fair but fleshly women, is unspiritual. Can there be such a thing as a Mohammedan mystic?

To anyone trying to understand the Mohammedan temperament I should recommend a study of the Arabian Nights; not of the truncated and enfeebled editions of our English schoolrooms, but, if possible, of Mardrus' glowing translation. Read, too, Hafiz and the Persian poets. Then you will feel the tremendous influence that poetry has over the Mohammedan. The poet, the seer of beauty hidden and revealed, he who gathers light and colour with both hands, is already halfway towards being a mystic. By the gate of poetry the Mohammedan enters into mysticism. Of his spiritual exercises, none is more valued than music. Even dancing is to him a means of religious ecstasy. His mysticism is less intellectual than that of the Buddhist, less

abstracted and rarefied than that of the Hindu. In his search for God he still remains the swift horseman of the soul, the lover, the poet seeking the rose of the world. Mohammedan mystical literature approximates nearer to pure poetry and recedes further from philosophical theology than any other mystical literature. That is not saying, of course, that Moslem philosophy and theology are not of a high order. I merely wish to emphasize the fact that Sufi mysticism has unusual qualities of vividness and colour.

The Career of a Sufi.

Let us follow the career of a little Mohammedan who ultimately joins one of the great religious Orders and becomes a Sufi (professed mystic).

Mohammedans evidently believe that the mind of a baby is capable of receiving subconscious religious impressions, for, as soon as the child is born, "ulemi," or wise men, are bidden whisper in his ear the supreme affirmation of the Moslem faith—"ALLAHU AKBAR!" ("God is Great!"). This must be the first sound that the infant hears on entering the world: "Allahu Akbar!" ("God is Great!").

If, moreover, the parents of the child are pious, they will forbid the nurse using any other song to soothe him than the Holy Name—"Allah, Allah," murmured softly and reverentially. So the baby is accustomed to the sound of sacred words from his birth upwards. When he is four and a half, the boy is dedicated to God in the ceremony of Bi'smi'llah (in the Name of God). He then receives his first reading lesson from the Koran.[1] Amid general rejoicings, alms are distributed to the poor.

Not until he is seven years old is he taught to say his prayers. These are to be imparted lovingly and gently, and he is to be encouraged rather than forced to repeat

[1] I apologize to scholars for my inconsistent and probably inaccurate spelling of Arabic or Turkish words.

them. At the age of ten he may, however, be soundly beaten, should he refuse to pray.

Conversion.

Conversion is as well-recognized a stage in the religious life of the individual Mohammedan as of the individual Christian. Moslem literature abounds in accounts of conversion. It is natural, but unfortunate, however, that these stories should tell almost exclusively of the conversion of older men, of notorious sinners and blasphemers. The "spontaneous awakening," or the more violent "conversion," which may be said to form part of the normal religious life of any thoughtful boy or girl receives scant attention. If any Mohammedan Dr. Starbuck has compiled statistics and collected information about ordinary everyday conversion, it has not come my way.

Of course, a formal adherence to the external practices of religion necessitates no "conversion" at all. But for anyone whose religious life reaches any pitch of intensity, some more or less sudden realization of the existence of God in His relation to the soul of man would seem to be essential.

I add a few instances of Mohammedan conversion.

The Conversion of Málik ben Dínár.

Málik had always led a gay and thoughtless life. An accomplished musician and performer on the lute, he was always much sought after by his young companions. One evening he had been enjoying himself with a party of revellers till far on into the night. When at last all his friends slept, Málik alone was unable to rest. It seemed to him that he heard the lute on which he had been playing sing softly to itself. As he listened he thought he could distinguish the words that it was murmuring: "O Málik, why dost thou not repent?" These words came to him as a voice from heaven.

Straightway he arose, left his former companions, and sought out a teacher who might show him the way of holiness. Finding Hassan of Basra, Málik became his pupil, and in his turn grew into a saint.

The conversion of Málik is an instance of the part played by the æsthetic faculty in the religious life of the Mohammedans. Auditory hallucinations, of course, are frequently to be met with in the state of emotional tension accompanying conversion. The inner experience of "conviction of sin" projects itself outward, and the voice of the man's own heart appears to come from the lute, that interpreter of his artistic and erotic feelings. The experience is not, for this reason, to be crudely dismissed as illusory.

The Conversion of 'Abdalláh ben Mubárak al-Marwazí.[1]

"'Abdalláh was in love with a girl, and one night in winter he stationed himself at the foot of the wall of her house, while she came on to the roof, and they both stayed gazing at each other until daybreak. When 'Abdalláh heard the call to morning prayers, he thought it was time for evening prayers, and only when the sun began to shine did he discover that he had spent the whole night in rapturous contemplation of his beloved. He took warning by this, and said to himself: 'Shame on thee, O son of Mubárak! Dost thou stand on foot all night for thine own pleasure, and yet become furious when the Imám reads a long chapter of the Koran?'

"He repented and devoted himself to study, and entered on a life of asceticism."

The Conversion of Al-Fudail.[2]

"Al-Fudail, the celebrated highwayman, one night, while he was on his way to an immoral assignation,

[1] *Kashf al-Mahjúb,* by 'Alí ben 'Uthmán al-Jullábí al-Hujwírí, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson, p. 96.

[2] Claud Field, *Mystics and Saints of Islam,* pp. 192, 193.

was arrested by the voice of a Koran reader chanting the verse 'Is not the time yet come to those who believe, that their hearts should humbly submit to the admonition of God?'

"On this he exclaimed: 'O Lord! that time is come!' He then went away from that place, and the approach of night induced him to repair for shelter to a ruined edifice. He there found a band of travellers, one of whom said to the others, 'Let us set out,' but another answered, 'Let us rather wait till daylight, for Al-Fudail is on the road and will stop us.'

"Al-Fudail then turned his heart to God, and assured them that they had nothing to fear.

"For the rest of his life he lived as an ascetic, and ranked among the greatest saints. One of his recorded sayings is: 'If the world with all that it contains were offered to me, even on condition of my not being taken to account for it, I would shun it as you would shun carrion, lest it should defile your clothes.'"

Conversion of Ibrahim ben Adham, Prince of Khorassan.[1]

"Ibrahim was passionately addicted to the chase, and one day when so employed heard a voice behind him exclaiming: 'O Ibrahim, thou wast not born for this!'

"At first he took it for a delusion of Satan, but on hearing the same words pronounced more loudly, exclaimed. 'It is the Lord who speaks; His servant will obey.'

"Immediately he desisted from his amusement, and, changing clothes with an attendant, bade adieu to Khorassan, took the road towards Syria, and from thenceforth devoted himself to a life of piety and labour."

[1] Claud Field, *Mystics and Saints of Islam*, p. 193.

The Conversion of Al-Ghazzali (told in his own words).

"Reflecting upon my situation [as Professor in the University of Bagdad, eleventh century], I found myself bound to this world by a thousand ties. I then examined my actions. The best were those relating to instruction and education; and even there I saw myself given up to unimportant sciences, all useless in another world. Reflecting on the aim of my teaching, I found it was not pure in the sight of the Lord. I saw that all my efforts were directed towards the acquisition of glory to myself."

After this, as he was one day about to lecture, his tongue refused utterance; he was dumb. He looked upon this as a visitation from the Lord, and was deeply afflicted by it. His remorse for his wasted life was so great that he became seriously ill. The physicians said that he could not recover unless he could shake off his depression, for his sickness was of the mind rather than of the body.

"Then," he continues, "feeling my helplessness, I had recourse to God as one who has no other recourse in his distress. He compassionated me, as He compassionates the unhappy who invoke Him. My heart no longer made any resistance, but willingly renounced the glories and pleasures of this world."[1]

Conversion of Báyazíd.[2]

"One night in my boyhood I came forth from Bisṭám. The moon was shining and everything was still. I saw a Presence, beside which the eighteen thousand worlds appeared as an atom.

"Agitation fell upon me, and a mighty emotion overwhelmed me. I cried: 'O Lord, a court of this

[1] Claud Field, *Mystics and Saints of Islam*, p. 194.
[2] Reynold Nicholson, "Origin and Development of Ṣúfiism," *J.R.A.S.*, p. 327.

grandeur, and so empty! Works of this sublimity, and such loneliness!'

"Then a voice came from heaven saying: 'The court is empty; not because none comes, but because We do not will; since it is not everyone with face unwashed that is worthy to enter this court.'

"For twelve years I was the smith of my soul. I put it in the furnace of austerity and burned it in the fire of combat, and laid it on the anvil of reproach and smote upon it with the hammer of blame until I made of my soul a mirror. Five years I was the mirror of myself and was ever polishing that mirror with divers sorts of worship and piety. Then for a year I gazed in contemplation. On my waist I saw a girdle [symbol of Zoroastrian duality] of pride and vanity and self-conceit and reliance on devotion and approbation of my works. I laboured for five years more, until that girdle became worn out and I professed Islam anew. I looked and saw that all created things were dead. I pronounced four takbírs over them and returned from the funeral of them all, and without intrusion of creature, through God's help alone, I attained unto God."

One more account of conversion must suffice. I choose that of the celebrated Sufi, *Ferid-eddin Attar*.[1]

"He was a druggist by trade, and one day was startled by one of the half-mad fakirs who swarm in Oriental cities pensively gazing at him while his eyes slowly filled with tears. Ferid-eddin ordered him to go about his business.

"'Sir,' replied the fakir, 'that is easily done, for my baggage is light. But would it not be wise for you to commence preparations for your journey?'

"The words struck home. Ferid-eddin abandoned his business and devoted the rest of his life to meditation and collecting the sayings of the wise."

[1] Reynold Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. 195; also spelled Farid-uddin.

Conversion.

Conversion, then, shows much the same characteristics with the Mohammedan as with the Christian—or, indeed, with the genuine seeker after God, in no matter what religion he may be brought up. The process begins with a conscious or unconscious sense of dissatisfaction with worldly life and selfish aims, a reaching out to something higher and purer. It may be that the seeker, in order to quiet his restlessness, plunges deeper in frivolous pursuits and hides from himself as well as from his friends the fact that he is unhappy. Then comes the climax, precipitated perhaps by some misfortune or by some emotional crisis, or by a passing word from someone already illumined. The man is suddenly brought face to face with the fundamental realities of the spirit—God, man's sinful life, the need for regeneration. He hears the voice of God in the sound of his lute, in the wind whistling behind him at the hunt, in the chant of a beggar. All the feelings that have been prepared and matured for him in the depths of his unconscious mind now come to birth in consciousness. What wonder that even ordinary people at the time of their conversion should have strange and unusual experiences! They hear angelic voices, see heavenly lights, feel supernatural contrition and joy. Naturally each man interprets his experience in the terms of his religious upbringing. The Christian gives thanks for the redeeming blood of Christ, the Mohammedan praises Allah and His Prophet.

It is notable that the state of mind at conversion approximates closely to the states induced by spiritual exercises. There are the same feelings of freedom and exaltation, of a sudden accession of power and of understanding. At conversion, as in meditation, the seer is vividly conscious of the presence of God.

Consequences of Conversion.

Conversion[1] has an immediate influence on a man's whole life. More than one writer has noted the way in which the converted sinner feels no difficulty in freeing himself from the shackles of evil habits against which he had previously struggled in vain. It is a matter of common knowledge, also, that the man's physical sight seems to behold a new world of celestial loveliness, where sky and fields and sea reflect the glory of God. He at once strives to beautify his own life in harmony with the beauty around him.

The Mohammedan, when setting out to reform and refashion his life, will naturally become a Sufi.

The Sufis.

The religious orders of the Sufis are of uncertain origin, but it seems likely that they were at the first merely bands of pupils gathered round hermits for instruction in religious matters. It was Jalal 'Uddin Rumi who appears to have obtained the recognition of the Sufis as religious orders.

The name "Sufi" probably comes from the word "suf," meaning "wool," since it was the custom of the Sufis to clothe themselves in that despised material rather than in linen or silk.

Though many Sufis have led the lives of monks and hermits, it is not necessary to do so in order to belong to one of the religious orders. The head of the order may even be married, while many Sufis live apparently ordinary lives in the world. Following the injunctions of Jesus concerning fasting, the Sufis are supposed to conceal their unworldliness and their ascetic practices. Hence there often arose the scandal of Sufis making displays of great luxury, while their asceticism was so

[1] For an excellent discussion of the whole matter, see Dr. A. C. Underwood's *Conversion: Christian and Non-Christian,* to which reference has already been made.

well hidden that the sceptical onlooker disbelieved in it altogether.

The theological tenets of the Sufis are not fully known and probably vary from order to order. Mr. J. P. Brown[1] states their doctrine as follows:

1. God only exists. He is in all things, and all things are in Him.

2. All visible and invisible beings are an emanation from Him, and are not, really, distinct from Him. Creation is only a pastime with God. (*Cf.* the Hindu doctrine of Maya, and creation as the "play" of Brahma.)

3. Paradise and Hell, and all the dogmas of positive religions, are only so many allegories, the spirit of which is only known to the *Soofee.*

4. Religions are a matter of indifference, but some are better than others for reaching realities.

5. The soul existed before the body and will be ultimately absorbed into the Deity.

6. The aim of this life is union with God. To attain to this the grace of God is needed, but He always grants it to those who ask.

The object of the Sufi is the realization of his fundamental unity with God. To this end he adopts the usual means of the mystic—detachment, constant prayer, ascetic practices.

Detachment, of course, is an essential. "The Súfí," says 'Ali ben 'Uthmán al-Jullábí al-Hujwírí,[2] "is he that has nothing in his possession nor is himself possessed by anything."

Only suitable persons, however, declares the same writer, can become true Sufis, for the souls of some are veiled with the "veil of covering" which can never be removed, while the souls of others are but concealed with the "veil of clouding" which by meditation can soon be drawn aside.

[1] *The Dervishes,* pp. 11, 12 (abridged).
[2] *Kashf al-Mahjúb,* p. 37.

"It is impossible," he explains,[1] "to make a mirror out of a stone, though many polishers assemble to try their skill on it, but a rusty mirror can be made bright by polishing; darkness is innate in the stone, and brightness is inmate in the mirror; since the essence is permanent, the temporary attribute does not endure."

He speaks bitterly, moreover, of those persons who aspire to be Sufis without having the capacity and without submitting to discipline.

"The ignorant pretenders to Ṣúfiism are they who have never associated with a spiritual director (pír), not learned discipline from a shaykh, but without any experience have thrown themselves among the people, and have donned a blue mantle, and have trodden the path of unrestraint."[2]

Sufi Orders.

Our young Mohammedan, however, having experienced a genuine conversion, will join himself to one of the famous religious orders, and will there give proof of his vocation by his obedience to his director and by his zeal in meditation and asceticism. The preliminary training varies in different orders, but in every one is harsh and exacting.

Khalveti Order.[3]

In the Khalveti Order the neophyte must fast for forty days on bread and water. He lives in retirement and performs menial tasks for his director in the intervals of his prayers. His teacher gradually reveals to him the ninety-seven attributes of the Deity, the "beautiful names of God," and tells him how many times daily he is to repeat each name. This repetition of the sacred sentence may be continued far into the

[1] *Kashf al-Maḥjúb*, p. 5. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[3] I understand that the religious orders have been disbanded in Turkey.

night. When the neophyte becomes weary he may be bidden to drive away sleep by standing in painful attitudes or by tying his hair to a cord suspended from the ceiling. No wonder that when at last he sleeps his dreams should be strange and full of symbols. These dreams he must faithfully tell his director, who will by this means be enabled to gauge the progress that the pupil has made.

Mevlevi Order.

This is the famous order of the "dancing dervishes" whose performances at Constantinople were often visited by tourists. These dances are said to have been instituted by Jalal 'Uddin Rumi, founder of the Mevlevi Order. When parted from his spiritual director, Shams-i-Tabriz, Jalal 'Uddin invented these dances to distract his thoughts from his grief and to keep before his eyes the truths that his master had taught him. Originally mystic in significance, the dances were intended to represent the movements of planets round the sun, and the music of the spheres harmoniously circling to the glory of God. Flute-playing accompanied the dancing. The wild performance of the dancing dervishes represents a much-debased form of the original ritual dances.

In the Mevlevi Order the duration of the novitiate is 1,001 days. The neophyte must pray and fast and commit to memory long passages of the Koran. It is not uncommon to find Sufis, not only of this order, but of others, who can recite the whole of the Koran by heart.[1]

The novice is also gradually allowed to participate in

[1] The performance of the "dancing dervishes" is too well known to need description here. My mother, who witnessed it at Constantinople, says that it was followed by a very interesting ceremony of healing. The dervishes blew on the sick persons, and made passes over them. Then they placed them on the ground, wrapped up in blankets, and walked on them. After this the patients arose, apparently cured, and walked away.

public services and to take his place in the ceremonial dance.

Bektashi Order.

A similar novitiate is enjoined on the entrant into the Bektashi Order. Here, however, particularly elaborate ceremonies of initiation are usual. The novice must, moreover, have kept certain secrets, presumably of a religious kind, imparted to him by the head of the order. At a certain point in the initiation ceremony the shaykh whispers into his ear the secret vows of the order. These are believed to contain an affirmation of belief in Pantheism, but, as the secret has been better kept than most, no one, apparently, really knows.

Kadiri Order.

Members of the Kadiri Order are supposed to advance along the path of spiritual progress through certain well-defined stages. During the first stage the aspirant is given no other exercises beyond the observation of the usual forms of Moslem worship and the five canonical hours of prayer. He is taught, however, to concentrate his attention, and to meditate on his spiritual director, and to look on him as the first link in a chain of personalities which shall eventually lead him up to the supreme Person of God. He is to achieve as close a spiritual union as possible with his director. This practice, of course, is very closely allied to the "guru-worship" of the Hindu.

When the second stage is reached the neophyte has to make a transition from outward to inward worship. He studies the writings of famous Sufis and learns to understand the language of allegory and symbolism. The crudeness of the doctrines presented to the unenlightened becomes apparent to him. Here many men meet with shipwreck for the barque of their souls. Having put out from the safe harbour of conventional religion, they go ashore on the rocks of scepticism before

they can sail across the sea of spiritual understanding to safe harbour of the experimental knowledge of God.

The seeker after truth is taught to spend much time in solitary contemplation. Little by little, as he is able to bear it, his director reveals to him the hidden doctrine of the Sufis, drawing back, however, should he find that his pupil is shocked or alarmed at having familiar conceptions taken from him too brusquely.

At this stage the young dervish is said to be able to communicate spiritually with the founder of the order.

During the third stage he holds converse with angels and spiritual beings, and is supposed to be more closely allied to them than to ordinary men living selfish lives in the world. So, too, he is believed to meet with the Prophet and to enter into spiritual union with him.

Finally, the seeker is united to God, and sees Him everywhere and in all things.

Novitiates.

Similar novitiates would seem to be the rule in other orders also. 'Ali ben 'Uthmán al-Jullábí al-Hujwírí[1] makes the following statement with regard to the novitiate:

"The novitiate is of three years' duration. The first year is devoted (by the neophyte) to the service of the people, the second to the service of God, the third to the watching over his own heart. During the first year he must regard all other people as his masters and better than himself. In the second year he must cut off all selfish interests with regard to this world and the next, and worship God for His sake alone. Finally, 'his thoughts must be collected and cares dismissed from his heart.'"

Mr. J. P. Brown gives an account of the novitiate and reception of a young Mohammedan into a dervish order.[2]

[1] *Kashf al-Maḥjúb*, p. 54 (abridged).
[2] *The Dervishes*, pp. 94, 95 (abridged).

The task given by the shaykh to his pupil was that he should perform genuflexions and recite the "prayer of pardon" and the prayer to the Prophet for intercession each a hundred times. He was also to be careful to remember his dreams and to repeat them to the shaykh. Finally, he dreamed that he was made a dervish. When he had related this dream he was informed that the time for his reception had truly come. His further devotions were regulated by the shaykh on information conveyed in dreams. Five years, however, elapsed before he received full initiation. When he was initiated he was given the secret handclasp signifying "Aleph," the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. But what Aleph was supposed to mean to the mureed I do not know.

Dr. Nicholson gives an interesting account of the conversion and novitiate of the celebrated Abú Sa'íd, which I quote in full.[1]

"At the time when I was a student I lived at Sarakhs, and read with Abú 'Ali, the doctor of divinity. One day as I was going to the city, I saw Luqmán of Sarakhs seated on an ash-heap near the gate, sewing a patch on his gaberdine.

"I went up to him, and stood looking at him while he continued to sew. As soon as he had sewn the patch on, he said: 'O Abú Sa'íd, I have sewn thee on this gaberdine along with the patch.'

"Then he rose and took my hand, leading me to the convent of the Ṣúfís in Sarakhs, and shouted for Shaykh Abu'l-Faḍl-Ḥasan, who was within. When Abu'l-Faḍl appeared, Luqmán placed my hand in his, saying: 'O Abu'l-Faḍl, watch over this young man, for he is one of you.'

"The Shaykh took my hand and led me into the convent. I sat down in the portico, and the shaykh picked up a book and began to peruse it. As is the way of scholars, I could not help wondering what the book was.

"The shaykh perceived my thought. 'Abú Sa'íd,'

[1] *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 6-9.

he said, 'all the hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets were sent to preach one word. They bade the people say "Allah!" and devote themselves to Him. Those who heard this word by the ear alone let it go out by the other ear, but those who heard it with their souls imprinted it on their souls and repeated it until it penetrated their hearts and souls, and their whole beings became this word. They were made independent of the pronunciation of the word, they were released from the sound of the letters. Having understood the spiritual meaning of this word, they became so absorbed in it that they were no more conscious of their own non-existence.'

"This saying took hold of me and did not allow me to sleep that night. In the morning when I had finished my devotions I went to the shaykh before sunrise and asked permission to attend Abú 'Alí's lectures on Koranic exegesis. He began his lecture with the verse '*Say "Allah!" then leave them to amuse themselves in their folly.*' At the moment of hearing this word a door in my breast was opened and I was rapt from myself.

"The Imám Abú 'Alí observed the change in me, and asked: 'Where were you last night?'

"I said: 'With Abu'l-Faḍl-Ḥasan.'

"He ordered me to rise and go back, saying: 'It is unlawful for you to come from that subject (Ṣúfism) to this discourse.'

"I returned to the Shaykh distraught and bewildered, for I had entirely lost myself in this word. When Abu'l-Faḍl saw me he said: 'Abú Sa'íd, thou art drunk, poor youth; thou knowest not head from tail.'

"'O Shaykh,' I said, 'what is thy command?'

"He said: 'Come in and sit down and devote thyself wholly to this word, for this word hath much work to do with thee.'

"After I had stayĕd with him for a long time performing duly all that was required by this word, he said to me one day: 'O Abú Sa'íd, the doors of the letters of this word have been opened to thee. Now the hosts

[of spiritual grace] will rush into thy breast, and thou wilt experience diverse kinds of self-culture.'

"Then he exclaimed: 'Thou hast been transported, transported, transported! Go and seek a place of solitude, and turn aside from men as thou hast turned aside from thyself, and behave with patience and resignation to God's will.'

"I abandoned my studies and came home to Mayhana and retired into the niche of the chapel in my own house. There I sat for seven years, saying continually: '*Allah! Allah! Allah!*' Whenever drowsiness or inattention arising from the weakness of human nature came over me, a soldier with a fiery spear—the most terrible and alarming figure that can possibly be imagined—appeared in front of the niche and shouted at me, saying: 'O Abú Sa'íd, say Allah!' The dread of that apparition used to keep me burning and trembling for whole days and nights, so that I did not again fall asleep or become inattentive; and at last every atom of me began to cry aloud: '*Allah! Allah! Allah!*'"

Attitudes and Methods of Prayer.

It is interesting to note that the attitudes and methods of prayer differ in the different orders. For instance, the *Mevlevees* pray standing and in silence, turning round from east to west. On Sunday and Friday they meet together and, while seated in a circle, repeat the word "Allah" a thousand and one times.

The *Kadirees* stand upright to pray, and each man, placing his hands on the shoulders of the man in front of him, makes a part of a circle which revolves slowly round the hall.

The *Nakshibendees* pray seated in a circle, repeating a thousand and one times a prayer called Iklâs. They divide a thousand and one pebbles among the dervishes present. As each dervish recites his prayer he places a pebble in front of him in the circle to show that he has duly accomplished his portion of the common task.

The *Jelvetees* pray on their knees in Christian fashion.

The *Hamzavees* pray seated and in silence, contemplating the Divine Spirit and seeking the Noor, or Divine Light. It is said that they seek the Divine Light by gazing at their navels, after the fashion of the monks of Athos.

The *Rufaes* hold worship in common, with five different stages, the whole lasting three hours or more. They begin by chanting as they stand in a circle, while they perform quiet and rhythmic movements. Next they touch each other, and the chant turns into shouts of "Ya Hoo! Ya Allah!" Then one dervish steps forward into the centre of the circle and by voice and gesture excites the others. The dance grows wilder until the performers reach a pitch of excitement in which they are able to touch hot iron without feeling pain. Edward William Lane gives an interesting account of a performance of the Zikr by Ahmedee dervishes, which he witnessed himself.[1]

The Zikkeers, to the number of thirty or so, took up their position near the tomb of a saint, seated cross-legged on some matting, in the form of an ellipse. There were four leaders of the singing and one flautist.

The performance began by the recitation of the opening chapter of the Koran and a blessing on the Prophet. Then followed a grave and solemn chant—"Lá i-lá-ha il al-láh," repeated over and over again. The dervishes bowed their heads and bodies twice at each repetition. The slow chanting continued for a quarter of an hour, when the pace became quicker. While this was proceeding the singers sang an ode of love to the Prophet, or one shouted out the word "meded" to invoke spiritual aid.

Slow chanting, gradually increasing in pace, was resumed, but to a different air. Finally, the performers rose to their feet and chanted again, with hoarse emphasis on "Lá."

[1] E. W. Lane, *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages*, ed. by S. L. Poole, p. 74.

"All the performers now seemed much excited, repeating their ejaculations with much rapidity, violently turning their heads and sinking their whole body at the same time, some of them jumping. . . . The contrast presented by the violent and distressing exertions of the performers at the close of the Zikr, and their calm gravity and solemnity of manner at the commencement, was particularly striking.

"Zikkeers receive no pay."

The Use of the Holy Sentence.

From the quotations that have already been given the reader will have gathered that the training of the Sufi is long and often extremely painful. The most usual, as well as the most potent of all the spiritual exercises used in the training of the aspirant, is the repetition of the name of God. Again and again in manuals of religious instruction, in lives of holy men, we find the use of the name of God or of a sacred sentence prescribed as the best discipline for the soul.

"Let the seeker sever all the ties of this world. Let him sit alone in some corner, limiting his religious duties to what is absolutely incumbent—and not consider the meaning of the Qu'rān. Let him say, 'Allāh! Allāh!' keeping his thought on it. At last he will reach a state when the motion of his tongue will cease, and it will seem as though the word flowed from it. Let him persevere in it until all trace of motion is removed from his tongue and he finds his heart persevering in the thought. Let him still persevere until the form of the words, its letters and shape, is removed from his heart and there remains the idea alone. . . .

"If he follows the above course (of remaining passive) he may be sure that the light of the real will shine out in his heart. At first unstable, like a flash of lightning, it turns and returns."[1]

[1] D. B. Macdonald, *Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, p. 255 (abridged).

Again, J. P. Brown writes:[1]

"If anyone can call upon the name of *Allah* a hundred times in a minute, it is held to be still more meritorious to do so double that number of times in the same period of time. They [the dervishes] believe that *Allah* will and does manifest Himself to the devout worshipper in a special manner whilst so occupied, and that around the heart a Divine Light, or *Noor*, is shed in answer to his frequent calls. Also that the word *Allah* becomes distinctly impressed upon the heart, visible to the spiritual eyes of the devotee."

And this is how Sahl ben 'Abdalláh trained his disciples:[2]

"He said to one of his disciples, 'Strive to say continuously for one day, "O Allah! O Allah!" and do the same the next day and the day after that,' until he became habituated to saying those words. Then he bade him repeat them at night also, until they became so familiar that he uttered them even during sleep. Then he said: 'Do not repeat them any more, but let all your faculties be engrossed in remembering God.'

"The disciple did this, until he became absorbed in the thought of God. One day when he was in his house a piece of wood fell on his head and broke it. The drops of blood which trickled to the ground bore (to his mind) the legend 'Allah! Allah!'"

At times the mureed, or disciple, needs the help of his spiritual director before the sacred sentence can accomplish its beneficent work. The following quotation shows the way in which the teacher comes to his pupil's aid:[3]

"In the first place, the Sheikh, or teacher, must with his heart recite, 'There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the Prophet of Allah,' whilst the Mureed keeps his attention fixed by placing his heart opposite that of the Sheikh. He must close his eyes; keep his

[1] *The Dervishes*, p. 65.
[2] *Kashf al-Mahjúb*. 'Ali ben 'Uthmán al-Jullábí al-Hujwírí, p. 195.
[3] J. P. Brown, *The Dervishes*, pp. 127, 128.

mouth firmly shut, and his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth; his teeth tight against each other, and hold his breath; then with great force accompany the Sheikh in the *Zikr*, which he must recite with his heart, not with his tongue. He must retain his breath patiently, so that within one respiration he shall say the *Zikr* three times, and by this means allow his heart to be impressed with the meditative *Zikr*. . . . Ultimately you attain by its medium a proper conception of the *Tevheed* or 'unity of God.'"

Occasionally it is recommended that the mystical names of God should be pronounced as one is going to sleep. The seeker may then expect that his mind will be illumined by symbolic dreams, or that he will be taught subconsciously while he slumbers.

"In the books of those who have written about ascetic and mystical exercises, certain names are given. If they are pronounced at the time of going to sleep, a vision of what is looked for will come from them. These are called *al-hulūmīya* (Hebrew, Ḥălôm—dream). The author of a book of the kind has mentioned one of these, which he calls 'the halūma of the perfect nature.' It is that at time of sleep after the completion of religious exercises, and with complete intention of mind, these foreign words (unpronounceable without vowels, probably Hebrew or Syriac) should be pronounced, and that the seeker should bear in mind his need; for he will see in slumber the unveiling of that concerning which he asked.

"It is related that a certain man [probably Ibn Khaldun himself] did that after a preparation of some nights as to his food and religious exercises. Then a form appeared to him, saying: 'I am thy perfect nature.' Then the man asked his questions, and was told what he had been looking for.

"To me myself have come, through these names, strange appearances, and I have learned by them details of my circumstances into which I was looking."[1]

[1] *Ibn Khaldun*, trans. de Slane, p. 75.

Ibn Khaldun, by the way, was most enlightened in the matter of dream-interpretation. He explains how the mind clothes its subconscious knowledge in the vivid pictorial language of symbolism, which the conscious mind must interpret for its own use.

Some of the sacred sentences and "beautiful names of God" are said to have certain lights and colours corresponding to them. The aspirant is to visualize the colour while he is reciting the sentence the correct number of times. In the Kadiree Order no man may be shaykh until he has recited all the names of God according to their colours and numbers. By this means not only is his soul purified, but his breath is supposed to become holy, so that he can work miracles of healing.

The most famous words and sentences to be used as spiritual exercises are:

	Colour.	*Number.*
1. Allah	Yellow	78,586
2. La illâhé ill'Allah (There is no God but Allah) ...	Blue	100,000
3. Ismi Hu (His Name) ...	Red	44,630
4. Ismi Hay (Name of the Eternal)	White	20,092
5. Wahid (The One God) ...	Green	93,420
6. 'Azîz (Dear God)	Black	74,644

Similarly, the Shiites repeat "Ali" and "Hasan Husain."

Light-Centre Meditations of the Nashibendee Order.

According to Muhammad Sarfarāz Husayn Qārī,[1] the Nashibendee (or, as he calls them, "Naqshbandiyah") Order meditate on centres of light supposed to be found in the body. This is, of course, very much like the Hindu meditation on the Chakkras, and may have been derived from it.

[1] *Islam*, p. 21.

The method is described as follows. Diagrams of the light-centres are added, to make the process more clear:

"By means of fixed methods of contemplation, these several centres of light are discovered and become 'current,' when the student finds every part of his body spiritually lit up, as it were. But at this stage he finds differences of colour. When all these six centres have become current [*i.e.*, luminous], a certain process called 'Sultān-al-adhkār' (the 'King of practices') is administered, whereby the student gets rid of the above-described differences of colours and discovers the sameness of light which has no colour. The whole of the Inside becomes fully illumined. Later on he discovers the same illumination Outside also, and finally cannot find any difference between the Inside and the Outside, and becomes perfectly harmonized, which is the Goal, the Aim = Islam."[1]

Brain.
The mysterious.
Green.

Forehead.
The hidden.
Black.

The heart.
Yellow.
(Under the left nipple.)

Breast.
The secret.
White.

The spirit.
Scarlet.
(Under the right nipple.)

The self.
White, like the moon.
(Under the navel.)

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

The exact meaning of these light-centre meditations is extremely obscure. We are not told what thoughts are to accompany concentrations on "the Secret" or "the Mysterious," nor are we informed concerning the nature of the "King of practices." To the initiated the light-centres are certainly symbolic, and have no actual connection with parts of the physical body. They probably represent different ways of approach to the conception of Absolute Unity—the various paths whereby man may attain to the knowledge of God. The student meditates on the divine in human affections, in learning, in work, etc. Gradually he perceives the Divine Light outside himself, in God transcendent, and in God's creatures, and also within himself as the divine spark in his own soul. In the final stage the divine is recog nized as One wherever it may be found, and the pilgrim has reached the end of his spiritual journey.

There is no doubt, however, that these light-centres have been imagined by the ignorant to exist truly in the body.

Any of the above-mentioned meditations may be accompanied by prostrations. Some shaykhs order their novices to prostrate themselves four hundred times in a single night.

Mirror-gazing.

Another method used to induce concentration is prolonged gazing at the surface of a mirror. When the pupil has stared for a long time at a mirror, his mind becomes free from distractions. Finally, as his eyes grow weary, a mist seems to form itself over the mirror, and on it symbolic forms or letters show themselves. The procedure would seem very much like the familiar device of the crystal-gazer, who stares at a bright ball in order to inhibit her conscious mind and to allow free play to her subconscious intuitions. Oddly enough, crystal-gazers, or at least the foolish folk who consult them, appear to think that the shapes they see are

actually and objectively *in* the crystal, and even that some supernatural power has put them there.

Hypnotic Meditations.

There is, of course, no doubt that mirror-gazing and mechanical repetitions of sacred sentences belong to the hypnotic class of meditations. Their object is the education of the unconscious mind. The teachers have come, presumably by experience, to believe that where the unique and overwhelming importance of God is impressed on the unconscious mind, even if this be accomplished by means that appear to be merely mechanical, a saintly life is bound to be the result. It must be remembered, however, that these meditations *must* be performed with religious intention, and accompanied by the consecration of one's whole life to God. When the young Sufi is convinced that the one significant fact in the universe is " There is no God but Allah," he is safe from the temptations of his lower nature. His unconscious mind dominates his impulses and his instinctive actions, and these will henceforward tend naturally to the glory of God. Strengthened by ascetic discipline, purified by the illumination of ecstasy, the Sufi may in the final stage of his development, be trusted to abandon his solitude, and to return to the world, where he will, in his turn, be able to recognize other men capable of undergoing the Sufi training.

Unfortunately, however, Mohammedan hagiography gives many pictures of holy men who have trained themselves too rigorously for the holy race, and whose minds have become warped and distorted by too much asceticism and by too much prayer. Ignorant devotees have frequently worshipped these half-crazed holy men as divine, thinking the saint's very incapacity for the affairs of this world to be a proof of his fitness for the next. On the other hand, many religious geniuses have been considered insane. It is not always easy for the outsider to apply his ordinary weights and scales of

sanity and common sense to the inspirations or aberrations of the holy man.

Intellectual Meditations.

Not all the spiritual exercises of the Sufi, however, are of the hypnotic order, and not all are intended even remotely to induce ecstasy. For instance, the "disciplined student of a philosophical turn of mind" is bidden to occupy his thoughts as follows:

"The solution of the single question 'What am I?' forms the basis of the realization of the self.[1]

First Meditation: I am not body.
Second Meditation: I am not the senses.
Third Meditation: I am not the mind.
Fourth Meditation: I am not this.
Fifth Meditation: I am not that.

"These are the answers which will suggest themselves to the question 'What am I?' till at last the reality is discovered, when the logic asserts itself thus:

It is in this body.
It is in everybody.
It is everywhere.
It is omnipresent.
It is all.
It is Self = It is it = Absolute Oneness = Islam."

The same author suggests that the aspirant should also meditate on—

1. Texts of the Koran hung up before him.
2. Some beautiful natural object.
3. A beloved relative, such as mother or sister.
4. Breathing (probably with the implication that breath = life).
5. That the student should imagine a tree springing up from him and giving shade to the whole world.

[1] Muhammad Sarfarāz Husayn Qārī, *Islam*, pp. 21, 22.

Music.

As Mohammedans are forbidden, for fear of idolatry, to paint pictures of the human form or to fashion statues, it is natural that their artistic impulse should find an outlet in music. Music is, of course, recognized in every religion as an aid to devotion. To the Sufi it is more than this; it is of the very atmosphere of the spiritual life itself. The music which is heard on earth is to him a faint echo of the songs of heaven. When an earthly musician composes, he does not express his own feelings and ideas; he brings down within the compass of human understanding the dimly-heard melodies of the angels. Music is no mere invention of men; it is a real and direct gift of God. Certainly anyone who has been in any degree the recipient of inspiration, whether musical or poetical, will declare that he does not feel as if he himself had composed the tune or the poem, but that it was "given" to him by some agency outside himself, and that he passively transcribed. There is a curious sense of tense, excited listening, of being in touch with powers greater than oneself, with which every artist must be in some degree familiar. I know it well. Its presence is no guarantee of the artistic excellence of the resulting composition!

For instance, Frances Ridley Havergal[1] writes: "I have a curious, vivid sense, not merely of my verse faculty in general being given me, but also of every separate poem or hymn—nay, every line, being given. It is peculiarly pleasant thus to take it as a direct gift; not a matter of effort, but purely involuntarily."

"You know how a child would look up at every sentence and say: 'And what shall I say next?' That is just what I do. I ask that at every line He would give me, not merely thoughts and power, but also every *word*, even the very rhymes."[2]

The Sufi believes in religious emotion. He would not

[1] *Memorials,* by her sister M. V. G. H., p. 82.
[2] P. 105.

understand the Puritan distrust of feelings that have been aroused by beautiful music. It is right and fitting, he argues, that we should be stirred up to adore God. Why suspect that which thrills and moves us? He would rather distrust, as Shakespeare does, the people who are unaffected by music.

"Anyone who says," remarks 'Ali ben 'Uthmán,[1] "that he has no pleasure in sounds and melodies and music, is either a liar and a hypocrite, or he is not in his right senses, and is outside the category of men and beasts."

So, too, Al-Ghazzali:[2] "And I say that to God Most High belongs a secret consisting in the relationship of measured airs to the souls of men, so that the airs work upon them with a wonderful working. . . . He whom the spring does not move with its blossoms, nor the '*ūd* with its strings, is corrupt of nature; for him there is no cure.'"

For even camels love the driving song, and by it are moved to forget their fatigue and to march across the desert according to their master's will. Is a man less than a camel, that music will not move him to ride onwards in his quest for God?

The hearing of music, then, is definitely recommended as a spiritual exercise.

Al-Ghazzali, in the extremely interesting little book to which reference was made above, gives seven occasions on which music is fitting. The singing to arouse longing for God is the most profitable.

Seven Occasions when Music is Fitting.

1. The singing of the pilgrims who go around the country before they set out, stirring up longing for the holy places.

[1] *Kashf al-Maḥjúb*, p. 401.

[2] *Emotional Religion in Islām as Affected by Music and Singing.* Being a translation of a book of the Iḥyā 'Ulūm ad-Dīn of al-Ghazālī, by D. B. Macdonald (*J.R.A.S.*, 1901, p. 218).

2. The singing of warriors to urge men to warfare.

3. Shouting in battle.

4. Music of lamentation. Sorrow for the dead is blameworthy, since death comes at the will of God. Sorrow of a man for his shortcomings in religion and weeping over his sins is praiseworthy.

5. Singing at marriages and feasts.

6. Listening to music and poetry by lovers, to arouse love.

7. Listening to music to arouse longing for God.

"The seventh is the listening of him who loves God and has a passion for Him and longs to meet Him, so that he cannot look upon a thing but he sees it in Him, and no sound strikes upon his ear but he hears it from Him and in Him. So listening to music, in his case, is an arouser of his longing and a strengthener of his passion and of his love, and an inflamer of the tinder-box of his heart, and brings forth from it States consisting of Revelations and Caressings, descriptions of which cannot be comprehended—he who has tasted them knows them, and he rejects them whose sense is blunt so that he cannot taste them. These states are called, in the tongue of the Ṣūfīs, *wajd* (rapture or ecstasy), from *wujūd* (finding), and *muṣādafa* (encountering); that is to say, he encounters in himself States which he had not encountered before he listened to the music. Then these States are causes of things which follow them, things which burn up the heart with their fires and purify it from taint of dinginess, just as fire purifies substances exposed to it from uncleanness. Then the purity that befalls the heart brings after it Visions and Revelations, and they are the utmost limit of the things sought by the lover of God Most High and the ultimate fruit of all pious works."[1]

Yet even should the music not be sacred in intention, the seeker after God may use it to stir up holy desires and emotions.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 229.

"Then whenever the Murīd hears mention of chiding or exhortation, or acceptance, or rejection, or union, or departure, or drawing near, or being distant, or bemoaning that which has escaped, or thirsting for that which is expected, or longing for that which arrives, or coveting, or despairing, or solitude, or seeking society, or accomplishing of a promise, or breaking of a covenant, or fear of separation, or rejoicing in close union, or mention of attention to the beloved and rejection of the watcher, or the pouring forth of tears, or the close following of one another of sobs, or length of separation, or promise of close union, or anything besides that of which poems contain the description, then without fail some of this must agree with the state of the Murīd in his seeking, and will act the part of a tinder-box, which will light the fuel of his heart. Then its flames blaze up in him, and longing is strongly excited, and there assault him because of it states to which he is not accustomed, and he has broad scope in applying the expression to his states. And it is not incumbent on the hearer that he should consider what the poet intended in his words. For every saying has different aspects, and every man of understanding has his own fortune."[1]

Mohammedan sacred music, as I have heard it, is of a particularly thrilling and poignant nature. Just as the sound of the bagpipes seems to awaken in the listener a longing to perform deeds of primitive and barbaric physical courage, so the Mohammedan chant excites desires for spiritual heroism. Indescribably emotional, the music yet has a keen and ascetic undertone, a sharp tang of suffering tempering the soft melody of ecstasy. It seems to contrast the cool, pure joys of the spirit, which are only to be quaffed from the cup of pain, with the sickly delights of earthly pleasure. To the Sufi the chant is a challenge, a call, a judgment. If you have heard its strains, you cease to wonder at the importance that the murid attaches to it.

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 706, 707.

The Results of Spiritual Exercises

From what has been written, the reader will already have understood the nature of the results that the Sufi expects from his spiritual exercises. He looks to them to help in the transforming of his whole nature and in the altering of all his sense of "values." Whereas before he was liable to be attracted by worldly success and flattened by the good opinion of men, while he considered that religion began and ended with the correct performance of external acts of worship, he now cares only for the approval of God, and knows that true religion means union with Him.

Stages of the Sufi.

Many writers have treated of the different stages through which the Sufi must pass on his spiritual pilgrimage. The most famous of these is the allegory of the *Parliament of Birds*, by Farid-uddin Attar. In the allegory the birds, who represent the winged and pilgrim souls, pass through seven valleys, the seven stages of the Sufi. The first is the *Valley of the Search*, where the seeker must cast away all his earthly possessions and care for nothing but the pilgrimage. The second is the *Valley of Love*. Here the traveller must be so on fire with love that for the time being faith and infidelity, good and evil, seem alike to him, and nothing has any reality save the ardour of his love for his Beloved.

In the *Valley of Knowledge* each wayfarer is illumined according to his capacity. He who sees truly beholds a path lie open to him through the midst of the fire, so that the furnace of this world becomes to him a garden of roses, and he is filled with happiness. Here he perceives the "almond within the shell"—that is to say, he sees God under the veil of Creation.

The fourth valley is the *Valley of Independence*. The

pilgrim is now free from everything but God. "The seven seas are no more than a pool of water, the seven planets are a spark, the eight paradises are only a single curtain, the seven hells are a mass of ice."

In the *Valley of Unity* he is enabled to contemplate the Divine Essence apart from its attributes. But in the *Valley of Amazement* he suffers torments because he cannot unite himself perfectly to the One.

Passing through this stage, however, the seeker finally reaches the *Valley of Annihilation*. Here his own personality is merged in the Divine, and his heart can no more be troubled.

J. P. Brown, in his book *The Dervishes*,[1] gives the stages of the Sufi as follows:

1. *Humanity*.—Here the mureed must observe established rites and perform ordinary religious and moral duties.

2. "*The Paths*."—The disciple attains to strength by mystical rites. He learns to penetrate to the spiritual meaning of religion.

3. *Knowledge*.—Here he becomes directly inspired from heaven, and learns from direct contact with the supernatural.

4. *The Truth*.—He becomes united to the Deity.

A present-day Moslem, Ikbal Ali Shah, writing in *The Hibbert Journal* of April, 1922, also speak of four stages through which the Sufi must pass on the way to spiritual perfection.

1. "*Hasāt*," *or Humanity*.—"The essential of proper observance in this phase, and the mere approach or avenue to the temple of Sufism, is the faithful observance of the tenets of Islam, its laws and ceremonies.

2. "*Tarequt*," *or the Manner of obtaining what is known as* "*Jubroot*," *or Potentiality, or Capacity*.—Here the neophyte dispenses with his guide and becomes a Sufi himself.

[1] Pp. 296-297.

At this stage some masters allow their pupils to discard rites and ceremonies altogether, while others consider that so drastic a change is not right.

3. "*Araff.*"—*This signifies that a condition of assured knowledge or inspiration has been reached . . .* which the Buddhists might call Arahatship. The eyes of the pilgrim have become opened, he has gained possession of supernatural knowledge, and is the equal of angels.

4. *Lastly is the stage of "Haqequt," or Truth,* perfect and supreme, for the union of the soul with the Deity is now complete. It is to be won only by long-continued meditation, constant prayer, and the complete severance from all things gross and earthly, for the man must be annihilated ere the saint can exist.

Poets and scholars, he adds, make the best Sufis.

"*Magical*" *Powers.*

As the Sufi advances in holiness he is supposed to develop certain powers not possessed by other men. These powers are to be hidden by the hermit or recluse, but should be shown forth by the religious teacher, not for his own renown, but that God may be glorified. The most important of these powers, and the ones which seem to be most frequently used, are the gifts of healing and of thought-reading. Innumerable instances of both of these may be found in the lives of the Mohammedan saints, both men and women. A properly equipped Sufi, however, should be able to foresee events, to preserve from harm anyone whom he specially wishes to protect, to restore peace between enemies, and to know of any evil that is being plotted against himself.

Power over wild animals is also among the Sufi's gifts. It is interesting to compare the familiar tale of St. Francis of Assisi and the wolf with the following story told concerning Ibrāhīm ibn Adham:[1]

"Ibrāhīm ibn Adham was in a travelling company,

[1] *Ibn Khaldun;* De Slane's trans., pp. 271, 272.

and a lion encountered them. But Ibrāhīm went to it and said, 'O lion, if thou hast been commanded anything against us, execute it; and if not, depart!' and the lion departed."

Another narrator says: "I was with Ibrāhīm-al-Khawwāṣ in open field, and when we were beside a tree a lion came. So I climbed the tree and remained there unsleeping until the morning. But al-Khawwāṣ lay down and slept, and the lion sniffed him all over from head to foot and went away.

"The second night we passed in a mosque in a village, and a bug fell upon his face and bit him, and he moaned and cried out. So I said: 'This is a wonder! Yesternight you were not troubled at the lion, and to-night you cry out for a bug!' But he said: 'As for yesterday, that was a state in which I was with God Most High, but as for to-night, this is a state in which I am with myself.'"

This saying of Ibrāhīm brings out clearly the fact that the Sufis do not attribute their supernormal powers to themselves, but to God, and explain that they can only exercise them when they are enjoying a supernormal state of consciousness. With the trained Sufi, as with the Hindu yogi, such a state should be more or less habitual.

Ecstasy.

It is hardly necessary to say that ecstasy is the most usual result of spiritual exercises. The terminology used to describe different ecstatic states is confused and contradictory. It is very hard to decide in the case of any particular word whether a temporary ecstatic state or an habitual disposition of the mind is being named. I should welcome any information calculated to throw light on this difficult subject.

The terms in most frequent use are:

1. *Hal* (the ecstatic state).—Apparently a generic term used for different degrees of ecstasy.

2. *Jum'* (union with God).—When in the state of "Jum'" the seer feels that his personality is united to God without being itself completely annihilated. Consciousness is like a pot of water in the ocean, filled and surrounded by the Divine.

3. *Wajd* (Ecstasy).—The supreme feeling of spiritual joy. This would include various sensations, such as the "flight of the spirit," "the kiss of love," etc. Individual consciousness is still retained.

4. *Fanā* (Passing away).—This may either mean the blotting out of individual consciousness in a concentrated awareness of God, or the passing away of individual desires and the achievement of "detachment." Fana appears to correspond closely to the Buddhist Nirvana.

"Acquired" and "Infused" Contemplation.

Like their Christian brethren, Sufi mystics have debated whether ecstasy should be deliberately induced or whether spiritual exercises are to be considered as a mere preparation of the soul, the ecstasy to follow or not, as God wills. There is no doubt that many Sufi set themselves to produce an ecstatic state, and that their devotees admire them for so doing.

Al-Ghazzali writes on the subject as follows:[1]

"Then know also that ecstasy is divided into that which itself attacks, and that which is forced, and that is called affecting ecstasy. Of this forced affecting of ecstasy there is that which is blameworthy, and it is what aims at hypocrisy and at the manifesting of Glorious States in spite of being destitute of them. And of it there is that which is praiseworthy, and it leads to the invoking of the Glorious States and the gaining of them for oneself and the bringing of them to oneself by device; for the Glorious States may be brought through such gaining for oneself. And therefore the Apostle of God commanded him who did not weep at the reading

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 730, 731.

of the Qur'ān that he should force weeping and mourning; for the beginning of these States is sometimes forced while their ends are true. . . . So there is no path for gaining for oneself anything possible for the soul and the members except by effort and practice at first; and thereafter it becomes nature through custom."

A Sufi Ecstasy.[1]

I add the account of some experiences, the result of prolonged meditation, of a French-speaking Sufi, who is still living. These states of consciousness, which appear æsthetic rather than religious, had an enormous influence on the individual experiencing them, changing the seer's whole outlook from one of misery and dissatisfaction to one of peace and certainty. I quote in the original French.

"Ma première expérience a eu lieu il y a deux ans environ. J'étais plein du désir de Dieu, et de la tristesse d'en être si loin. La vision de ma faiblesse et de mes défauts empoisonnait mon existence. N'osant pas songer que la perfection fut possible, pour moi du moins, je rêvais d'un état pur de tout mensonge. Si defectueux que je fusse, il me semblait que si tout le monde me croyait tel, je serais libéré de l'ennui de moi-même.

"Une nuit je m'éveillais dans une grande lumière, plutôt 'feu' que lumière. Ma conscience état totale. Je savais que j'étais dans mon corps physique, que je venais de dormir, et dans quelle chambre j'étais. En même temps, je me sentais en cœur de la béatitude, de la splendeur et de la paix. Quelque chose en moi disait 'Me voici tel que je suis.' Je n'en voulais rien croire et j'en avais à la fois la doute et la certitude. Ce fut une manifestation très rapide. Tout rentra dans l'obscurité.

"La nuit suivant mon initiation soufique j'eus la sensation très nette de deux êtres en moi. L'inférieur s'occupait à des pensées insignifiantes constamment; le

[1] From the author's manuscript collection.

supérieur s'en désinteressait, *montait au dessus de la pensée;* et tout à coup, avec un sentiment de bienêtre ineffable dans le cerveau, je me trouvais dans la joie d'une lumière opaline pointillée d'or.

" C'est cette experience toute enrichie, ou à peu près, que j'eus il y a quelques jours. L'être inférieur tournait le rouleau de ses images et de ses mots, tandis que j'étais enveloppé par un reseau de couleurs multicolores qui formait comme une orfèvrerie très fine rehaussée de pierres précieuses. En même temps j'étais bercé par une mélodie de cinq ou six notes qui s'assonnait en un rhythme constant. La même sensation de béatitude attirait mon être supérieure, mais je ne m'y laissait pas aller. Je préférais garder tout mon pouvoir d'observation.

" Je crois qu'il m'a été donné de prendre une partielle conscience de ce rhythme individuel que en chacun de nous s'exprime par la couleur, le son, la forme, le mouvement."

Symbolism, the Language of the Sufi.

Partly owing to the need of keeping their peculiar doctrines and experiences secret from ordinary orthodox Mohammedans, but perhaps more owing to a subconscious need for poetic expression, the Sufis have developed a vivid symbolic language.

In the Sufi dress, not only every garment, but every fastening, every fold, has a symbolic meaning. While in Sufi writing and conversation certain symbols from the life of sensual pleasure and of human love are regularly used with spiritual significance. The specimen of Sufi poetry most familiar to English readers is, of course, the " Rubaíyát " of Omar Khayyám, particularly in Fitzgerald's rendering. Omar's quatrains have often been understood, or rather misunderstood, in their literal sense, and he has been referred to contemptuously as a drunken philosopher who finished his quest for the Absolute within the tavern door. To one in any degree

familiar with conventional Sufi symbolic language such a mistake is impossible. It is not necessary to think that all Persian or Arabic poetry must therefore be symbolic —the love-songs of Hafiz, for instance, seem to me to deal with purely earthly love—but Omar was certainly a mystic and used well-known symbolism.

Every religion has its well-worn metaphors.

"Take up thy cross, the Saviour says," we sing, and do not look about us for a log of wood, a hammer, and some nails.

I asked a Persian Sufi, an educated man, graduate of a Persian university, whether the "Rubaíyát" was to be taken in its literal or symbolic sense. He looked at me with amusement and pity, as I might have looked at him had he asked me to interpret—

> "Nothing in my hand I bring,
> Simply to Thy cross I cling.
> Naked, come to Thee for dress,
> Helpless, look to Thee for grace.
> Foul, I to the fountain fly,
> Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

and had he wondered whether the hymn treated of physical empty-handedness, nakedness and ablutions.

No, he explained, the Sufis had a picturesque language all their own. Perhaps they intended the profane to interpret it literally. It was often part of their policy to try to appear worldly-minded. However, the secret was an open one, and everybody knew that wine meant ecstasy given by God—"Wine of heaven, inebriate me" is also a Christian petition—the tavern meant the secret chamber of the mystic's soul; the rose, the desert and the book had also their spiritual meanings.

Ikbal Ali Shah, in the article already quoted, gives some further explanations of the Sufi language.

Sleep is the meditation on divine perfection.

Perfume, the hope of divine inspiration and communion.

Zephyrs are the grace of God.

Kisses, the rapture of the soul in union with the Divine.

Beauty does not refer to earthly beauty, but to the perfection of God.

Love-locks are the radiance of His glory.

The down on the cheeks of the beloved are the bright spirits that serve Him in Paradise.

So, too, the *Keeper of the Tavern* is the spiritual director who introduces the mystic to the knowledge of heavenly delights.

Thus Omar becomes comprehensible.

> "And lately by the tavern door agape
> Came stealing through the dusk an angel Shape
> Bearing a vessel on his shoulder, and
> He bid me taste of it; and 'twas—the grape.
>
> "The grape that can with logic absolute
> The two-and-seventy jarring sects confute:
> The subtle alchemist that in a trice
> Life's leaden metal into gold transmute.
>
> "And this I know: whether the one True Light
> Kindle to love, or wrath consume me quite,
> One glimpse of it within the tavern caught
> Better than in the temple lost outright."

Sufism, then, must be considered as having arisen in answer to a genuine need for spiritual experience which could not be satisfied by Moslem theology, philosophy or ritual. The Sufis were men and women willing to submit themselves to long and severe discipline both of body and mind in order to attain to conscious communion with the Divine. In the course of their quest they doubtless made many mistakes. They were frequently led away by their love of the marvellous and the unusual. Their asceticism was sometimes barbarous, their methods of meditation seem, as often as not, strange and forced. There is, nevertheless, no doubt that the Sufis were genuine seekers after God, and that they were rewarded by feeling His Presence. Yet Sufism with its elaborate symbolism, its prolonged ascetic dis-

cipline, its love of the miraculous, and its tendency towards pantheistic quietism, is cast in a medieval mould, and one cannot help wondering whether it will survive. The religious orders in post-war Turkey have been disbanded. Modern Mohammedanism seems tending towards a cool Western rationalism, with the old religious forms prized chiefly for their nationalist value. Persia is opening her doors to Western education. In India, Mohammedanism appears to be on the whole non-mystical, and the same is true of Islam in Africa. Here and there, it may be, an educated Persian or Turk or Indian, inspired by the challenge of Christian mysticism, tries to restate Sufism in language of universal appeal, but the mass of Mohammedanism remains untouched by mystical ideas.

CHAPTER V

CHRISTIAN MEDITATIONS

Autobiographical.

WILLIAM JAMES, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, says that the ideal qualification for a writer on mysticism would be to have first naïvely undergone spiritual experiences, and afterwards to have critically examined them from a scientific point of view. One of my excuses for writing this book is that I possess this qualification. It was the (to me) strange and startling results of my meditations which aroused my interest in the whole question of mysticism, and in the problem of the validity of mystical experience. In the course of my investigations I have been obliged to modify opinions too uncritically held, but my belief in the genuineness of the experiences remains unshaken. My way of communion with the Unseen was, however, a Christian way, the result of Christian meditations. I cannot, therefore, pretend that this chapter will be wholly impartial, though, for the sake of uniformity, I try to write in the same tone of Christian as of non-Christian meditations.

The Moral Test in Christian Meditations.

The object of meditations in the Christian religion is totally different from that of non-Christian meditations. They must be used only to make the aspirant a better man or woman. Nor is the attainment of contemplation any guarantee of holiness. "The more virtuous a person is," writes Father Devine, the Passionist, "not the more contemplative, the holier he is, and if souls without contemplation are more virtuous, they are also holier than contemplative souls."[1]

[1] *A Manual of Mystical Theology*, p. 117.

It is quite orthodox, of course, to hold that the attainment of the Beatific Vision is the end and aim of the whole human race. Practically, however, spiritual directors and writers on meditation do not allow their followers to undertake exercises in order to produce mystical states of mind. Whereas the Hindu guru deliberately teaches his chelà to enter on a condition of hypnosis, and assumes that peculiar states of consciousness are valuable for their own sake, the Christian director wishes his penitent to meditate in order that he may progress in humility and in all the virtues. If God sends mystical "states," well and good. If not, there is more merit in serving Him in "aridity" than in "sensible devotion." Even when a man subjects himself to the complicated discipline of the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius, he must not do so in the hopes of rising to heights of contemplation, or of experiencing ecstasies, but that he may have his sense of sin increased, and that he may know whether God is calling him to a religious life. The states of consciousness which follow on meditation are all to be subjected to the moral test. Any sensation, however uplifting, which does not produce an increase of faith and of charity is of the devil and not of God. It must, therefore, be clearly kept in mind that Christian meditations are expected to have practical results, visible not only to the aspirant himself, but to his spiritual director, and to his possibly unsympathetic friends.

Mgr. Farges writes:[1] "If, instead of peace, the so-called contemplative evinces unrest and sadness; if instead of tenderness of conscience, becomes unmortified; instead of humility and yearning for self-concealment, makes a parade of his heavenly favours and desires to exhibit them; instead of heroic strength of soul, shows evidence of feebleness and cowardice; instead of hungering and thirsting after justice, lives a lukewarm life; finally, if, instead of the ardent desire of heaven and impatience for the life of the blessed, he is troubled at

[1] *Mystical Phenomena*, p. 107.

the thought of death, it is useless to push inquiry further; useless to pass on to discuss marvellous deeds which he may perform: his illusion, if not his trickery, is sufficiently manifest."

Where Meditation is practised at the Present Day.

The Eastern Church.—Methods of meditation were known before the division of Christendom, but it was in the Eastern Church that, for many centuries, the practice of meditation most flourished. Indian methods appear to have had considerable influence, and Oriental asceticism and contempt for the world was widespread. But though monasticism is still very tenacious of life, neither monks nor nuns in the Eastern Church are regularly instructed in meditation. For instance, the monks of Athos, who used to be famed for the curious practice of gazing at their navels in order to induce concentration, have given up meditation altogether. My brother, Professor Julius Tillyard, who has twice visited Mount Athos, and stayed at many of the monasteries, both Greek and Russian, assures me that the monks know nothing of meditation. Their time is well filled with religious services, agricultural pursuits, and so forth. They are simple, kindly, hospitable and devout without being in any way mystical. Mr. Hasluck, in his book on Mount Athos, gives the same impression.

I have failed to discover anything of interest among Religious in Russian monasteries and convents. The virtue that they chiefly cultivate is obedience, and it is through obedience to superiors that they expect to find spiritual peace.

The Roman Catholic Church.—The mystical tradition has never died out in the Roman Catholic Church, though here and there individual mystics, such as Molinos, have become suspect and incurred the censure of the Church. For an account of the progress of mysticism through the centuries, readers are referred to a short historical survey in Mgr. Farges' book *Mystical*

Phenomena, and to the excellent bibliography in Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism*. A study of all that the Christian mystics have written on methods of meditation and communion with God would take a lifetime. The extraordinary wealth of their writings is not yet fully known in this country. Rodriguez, Brother Lawrence, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, and other famous authors are read and re-read, but there are many mystics whose works are equally worthy of attention. For instance, Professor Peers is undertaking the publication of extracts from Spanish mystics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, together with critical estimates of their work. In writing of Luis de Granada, Francisco de Osuna, Luis de León, etc., he reveals to us a marvellous wealth of teaching and of experience. Contemporary Catholic writers, such as Dom Savinien Louismet, the Benedictine monk, are still at work explaining methods of meditation and pointing out familiar landmarks in the pilgrimage of the soul.

Reading mystical books taken from many countries, one is struck by a curious and lovely unanimity among them. Some of the mystics are clear, methodical, precise in their directions to the wayfaring soul; others are rambling and confused; one author is arid and technical, another full of imagery and poetry. Yet in different ways they all declare the same things—the need for detachment, humility and discipline; the schooling of the soul, first by self-mastery, and then by the training of God; the ineffable and indescribable beauty of communion with the Divine. A sharp distinction is drawn between "acquired contemplation," which the soul can achieve by its own efforts, and "infused contemplation," for which it is wholly dependent on the good pleasure of God.

In the Anglican Church, mysticism follows, for the most part, the Catholic tradition, particularly among those who call themselves Anglo-Catholics. The practice of meditation is not confined to the cloister. Many devout lay men and women are in the habit of attend-

ing retreats where competent priests give instruction in meditation. During Advent and Lent many parish churches give courses of sermons on such subjects as "Self-training in Prayer," "Methods of Meditation," etc. High Church clergymen who hear confessions often explain to their penitents how they should meditate, and prescribe courses of spiritual exercises. The up-to-date priest is not too proud to study modern psychology, and will supplement his knowledge of ascetic and mystical theology by reading Freud, Jung, Ernest Jones, and Tansley.

The Evangelicals.—Among members of the Free Churches, as well as among Low Church Anglicans, there is little formal practice of meditation. Their religion is based chiefly on reason, on the intellectual appeal to the conscious mind. Meditation, with its deliberate training of the unconscious, is not likely to make a very strong appeal. The Free Churchman is apt to be distrustful of the emotions and of anything that seems to him to induce feelings artificially. To him the dreamy, devout state of mind induced by solemn music, by the harmonious lights and shadows of a pillared church, by the gleam of candles in a dim chancel, and the scent of swinging incense, is a snare and a pandering to his lower nature. It tends, he feels, to make a man, and still more a woman, mistake sentiment for piety, and to enervate and weaken the whole character. The repetition of a sacred sentence, the watch before the Blessed Sacrament, the rapt contemplation of a crucifix or of the bleeding heart of Jesus, would seem to him to be a building of the sacred edifice of religion on a shifting sand of emotionalism. Right opinion and right action are the only solid foundations for religion. Nevertheless, the Free Churchman or the Anglican does meditate, with great affection and perseverance, on the Bible. He will read his daily portion of Scripture in such a way that favourite texts remain in his mind and sing themselves in his ears like a haunting tune. Ecstasy, perhaps, he rarely knows.

He would be more alarmed than edified at a sudden suspension of his reasonable faculties and a swift flight to the heights of contemplation. Yet, as he considers the things of God, he reaches a consciousness of the Divine Presence, intimate and lovely.

Frank Bullen,[1] writing of the time after his conversion, when he had been pondering the Scriptures day and night, says: "The next day was Sunday, and, rising at 4 a.m., I dressed and went ashore, climbing up to the top of Flagstaff Hill. . . . And there, alone in the sweet freshness of the morning, I remained for two hours, saturated with unspeakable joy. The beauty of land and sea and sky as the rising sun touched it with celestial gold, the waking of the birds, and, above all, the intimate certain sense of the presence of God in His (to me) recently discovered capacity of loving, tender Father, settled down upon my soul and filled me with such happiness as I think must be a foretaste of heaven. Unexplainable, indefinite, but a recompense for any amount of hardship, this living the new life communicated by the touch of Jesus. Human language, even at its highest and best, is totally inadequate to express this inexpressible joy, but I believe that all those who have claimed their blood-bought right of brotherhood to the Son have, according to their capacity, experienced it."

Among old-fashioned Nonconformists great stress was laid on religious experience. Candidates for adult baptism were expected to have felt conviction of sin and to have passed through conversion, while mature "professors" experienced the continued help of grace. Sometimes claim was even laid to perfection, the grace of God being so powerful that the believer imagined himself to be kept from all sin. It was possibly by contrast with these lofty pretensions that many timid and diffident souls felt that they had fallen terribly short of what was expected of them. Adolescents who

[1] *With Christ at Sea*, p. 121.

wished to become Church members were often deeply distressed because they had no startling religious experiences to relate, if, indeed, they were even definitely conscious of the saving efficacy of the blood of Christ. Evangelical Christianity is nowadays less exacting in its demands on the immature soul. It is recognized that the operations of grace can take place in the unconscious mind, and that harm may be done by ruthlessly dragging into light the growing seed of spiritual experience. In Wesleyan class meetings, however, members are encouraged to speak of the events in the life of their souls, and to discuss their religious feelings. No systematic meditations are, however, taught. The Salvation Army, too, has its "testimony meetings," when "the saved" testify publicly to the efficacy of divine grace in their sinful lives.

Spiritual Exercises in Common.—As has previously been pointed out, a spiritual exercise is not always carried out by the individual believer in solitude. Seekers may come together to meditate and to stimulate each other's spiritual faculties by the subtle sympathies of the group. It was no casual coincidence which brought the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to the disciples assembled together in one place and being of one mind, and all ardently waiting for the outpouring of divine power. The spark of spiritual apprehension, half dormant in the heart of the isolated believer, is kindled into flame by contact with the gathered fire of many souls together.

Two forms of spiritual exercises in common may be examined here. I refer to revival meetings and meetings of the Society of Friends.

Quaker Meeting.—At a Quaker meeting there is a deliberate intention to reproduce as far as possible the conditions prevailing at Pentecost, not, however, with the object of ecstatic communion with God, but that the faithful may be able to hear His voice guiding them to a right life. First Day after First Day, little companies of believers gather together in quiet unadorned rooms

and, being all of one mind, wait upon the Lord and expect to receive His Holy Spirit.

Have you ever been to a Quaker meeting? The people assemble very softly, and take their places with no stir and bustle. At first there are a few sounds, a child fidgets, someone's boot creaks, you sit down and wonder when "it" is going to begin. If you are accustomed to meditation, you banish intruding thoughts and concentrate on some familiar words of Scripture, or try simply to fill your mind with God. In any case, don't listen for someone to speak, don't wonder when "it" is going to begin. "It" has already begun.

All around there is an atmosphere of waiting upon God. We take down the shutters of everyday preoccupations and open wide the windows of the soul to the sunlight of spiritual reality. The stillness deepens. You feel a subtle fellowship, a communion with these other quiet, expectant souls. Each seems to be helping the other in the search after God. Daily worries grow smaller, show how trivial they are in the light of eternity, vanish altogether. In the unseen and not in the seen, lies the centre of reality.

Now the little room is filled with light. What a hush, what a radiance, what an apprehension of peace and of joy! The sense of time is lost. Surely God is with us in our midst, and heaven is here and now! . . .

It is quite a shock when a man rises to pronounce the Benediction; an hour has passed and no word has been spoken. "A good meeting," you hear someone comment, as the little company disperses. At times, however, there is a good deal of talking; possibly garrulous brethren have to be asked in subsequent privacy whether they are quite sure they were moved by the Spirit and not by the love of hearing their own voices. Or it may be that the sense of communion between the worshippers shows itself by one after another "speaking to the condition" of troubled souls there present.

The persistent attempt to get in touch with the

Unseen is, in any case, very impressive. It may be noted, too, that members of the Society of Friends, while basing all their religion on a mystical conception of the inward Light which shines in the heart of every man of goodwill, are extremely competent in business matters, and are the finest practical philanthropists that the world has ever seen. Anyone who is inclined to accept the theory that religion is pure phantasy, and that the mystic lives in an unreal world of his own creation, just as much as does the victim of *dementia præcox*, should study the life of such a man as Stephen Grellet, or consider that it was in the quiet of Quaker meetings that were conceived the striking humanitarian undertakings of the Society of Friends, both during and after the Great War.

Revival Meetings.—The old-fashioned "revival," which has to a great extent become suspect owing to the number of subsequent "backsliders" among men and women who had been suddenly converted, was a deliberate attempt to induce a certain state of mind by methods which experience had shown to be effective. The preacher wanted to convict his hearers of sin. He did not wish to argue with them about dogma; he intended to show them hell yawning at their feet, and to snatch them away from perdition by appeals as fiery as the flames that consume the damned. The power of mass suggestion, bright lights and a close atmosphere, emotional hymn-singing, oft-repeated phrases such as "Come to Jesus, Come to Jesus," contributed to produce a semi-hypnotic state of consciousness in the minds of the unconverted. It was necessary for the preacher to possess gifts of oratory.

On one occasion William Booth likened the sinful soul to a ship in distress, labouring at the mercy of wind and sea. Christ was the lifeboat, the only hope of salvation from certain death. As he described the scene and, with wild gestures, acted the distress of the men on board the vessel, the dramatic effect was such that a sailor in the audience leapt to his feet and flung

off his coat, prepared to plunge into the sea to the rescue.

It was no uncommon thing for converts to cry out in agony of mind, to writhe on the floor, to be stricken dumb. The scenes at the Welsh revivals are well known. In a curious little book called *Signs and Wonders*, by Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter, an American lady, similar accounts are given. On one occasion fifteen men and women came to the altar screaming for mercy. Men and women fell and lay like dead. Crowds pressed to the mourners' bench and confessed Christ with cries and tears. Reports came in of people having trances, not only in church during the revival meetings, but also in their own homes. Scoffers were deprived of the power of speech, or petrified in their attitude of scorn.

Readers will remember the strange lights that were said to hover about the scenes of the Welsh revival. Dallas, Texas, seems to have witnessed the same phenomenon, for the glory of the Lord shone everywhere, and Mrs. Woodworth-Etter writes that at times she was almost blinded by it.

Here is also an account of a Salvation Army meeting:[1]

"On September 13 was a wonderful time. Oh, God did search all hearts that night. After speaking about giving up all and being kept by the power of God, and singing 'I am trusting, Lord, in Thee,' we fell on our faces in silent prayer.

"Then God Almighty began to convict and strive. Some began to weep, some groaned, some cried out aloud to God. One man said: 'If I cannot get the blessing, I cannot live.'

"Another said, 'There's something, there's something—O my God, my God, help me, set me straight, put my heart straight,' and while we sang

> 'Saves me now, saves me now,
> My Jesus saves me now,'

[1] H. Begbie, *Life of William Booth*, p. 414.

a dear young sister stepped up to the table, then two more followed, and now we sang again:

'Saves me now, saves me now,
Yes, Jesus saves me now.'

"Many more were smitten. We dropped on our knees again. Five or six came forward. One dear man took his pipe from his pocket and laid it on the table, resolved that it should stand between his soul and God no longer. Then six or seven more came forward. We could then scarce sing or pray. Everyone was overpowered by the Spirit. One young man, after struggling and wrestling nearly an hour, shouted: 'Glory! Glory! Glory! I've got it. Oh, bless God!'

"One young woman shook her head, saying, 'No, not to-night,' but soon was seen on the ground, pleading mightily with God. Every unsanctified man or woman felt indescribably. Three or four times we cleared the tables and penitent forms, and again they were filled. And all joined in singing the words

'I have Thee, oh! I have Thee,
Every hour I have Thee,'

and one brother said: 'Oh, if this ain't heaven, what will heaven be?'

"Another brother said: 'I must jump.' I said: 'Then *jump!*' And he jumped all round.

"So we sang, cried, laughed, shouted, and after twenty-three had given their all to the Master, we closed, singing:

'Glory, glory, Jesus saves me,
Glory, glory to the Lamb.'"

Suitable Conditions for Meditation.

The seeker after communion with God usually, however, prefers solitude to the company of other aspirants. Quiet and loneliness are felt to be more efficacious than the stimulus of the group. In his own room or cell, or

alone in a church, he can best concentrate his faculties on the object of his quest.

"The condition of this art (of meditation)," writes Raymond Lull,[1] "are that a man should be suitably disposed towards contemplation, and in a fitting place, for by repletion or overmuch grieving, or in a place wherein is bustle and noise, or excess of heat or cold, his contemplation may be hindered. And the chief condition of all is that a man be not impeded by temporal cares in his memory, understanding, or will when he enters upon contemplation."

More important, then, than physical solitude is the solitude and detachment of the spirit. The aspirant must be freed from worldly preoccupations if he is to succeed in his meditations. He may, if he will, love humanity, but he must not be ambitious for the praise of the world, or desire to have his spiritual achievements noticed and appreciated by others. He is not forbidden to love individuals, but he must love them in such a way that he is not dependent on them for peace in his soul. Their praise or censure must be powerless to turn him from a course of action which he believes to be right, his serenity must be untroubled by their love or their aversion. Though he does well to be sensitive to beauty in nature and in art, the reality of material things must be, for him, at best a dream compared with the undying reality of the Spirit. In the unseen and not in the seen is the home of his soul. Solitude makes the unseen more vivid, and delivers him from the noisy thronging of earthly affairs. None of the great mystical writers fail to praise solitude. The cell, the lonely room, the church, empty save for the solitary contemplative, become the symbols of the secret closet of the soul, where the mystic, like a bride in the bride-chamber, may commune with God.

The Catholic, Anglican or Roman, who centres his

[1] *The Art of Contemplation,* trans. by E. Allison Peers, p. 19.

meditations on the sacred Host, perhaps prefers, of all places, a church where the Sacrament is reserved.

"When I raise my eyes to the Host," a Catholic wrote to me, "I see It radiating Light in wonderful beams. It draws me towards it. I feel Christ there, and He calls me to Him until my soul answers. It goes forth from me and is merged in Him."

It is worth recalling in this connection Father Hugh Benson's little sketch "In the Convent Chapel," where the communion between the spirit of the nun and the reserved Sacrament is represented as a kind of electric current sending out vibrations all over the world and causing strange effects for good.[1]

"This black figure (of a nun) knelt at the centre of reality and force, and with the movements of her will and lips controlled spiritual destinies for eternity. There ran out from this peaceful chapel lines of spiritual power that lost themselves in the distance, bewildering in their profusion and terrible in the intensity of their hidden fire. Souls leaped up and renewed the conflict as this tense will strove for them. Souls, even at that moment leaving the body, struggled from death into spiritual life, and fell panting and saved at the feet of the Redeemer on the other side of death. Others, acquiescent and swooning in sin, woke and snarled at the merciful stab of this poor nun's prayers."

Posture.

The usual posture adopted in meditation is that of kneeling. Dr. R. H. Thouless, in his *Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*,[2] makes some interesting remarks on the subject of posture, and points out that, while the Nancy School of Suggestion recommend a comfortable, relaxed attitude when one is trying to attain mental receptiveness or concentration, most people who pray find that they control their thoughts better when their posture is not too easy. Evidently too

[1] *The Light Invisible*, p. 124. [2] Pp. 168, 169.

much comfort makes for vague day-dreaming, whereas a familiar attitude of slight discomfort induces "recollection." My idea is that the most important thing about posture is that it should be reserved for meditation and for meditation alone, in order that an immediate mental connection should be established when the posture is taken up. Sitting comfortably suggests nothing special; we sit at ease to read novels, or to chat with our friends, or to darn our children's stockings. But we do not habitually kneel unless we pray. Kneeling, then, by being set apart as the prayer attitude, at once suggests a prayerful frame of mind.

Objects of Meditation.

The devout person, having chosen the place and posture most suitable for meditation, will concentrate his attention on some holy matter. He should place himself in the presence of God, banish intruding thoughts, and make a consecration of his whole being—body, soul and spirit—to his Lord. Should the meditation he proposes to make be purely intellectual in character, he will find a text of Scripture suitable. Textbooks of devotion recommend also the following:

The Three Theological Virtues. — Faith, Hope, Charity.

The Four Cardinal Virtues. — Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance.

The Seven Capital Sins, with their corresponding *Virtues:*

- *Pride*, to be conquered by a meditation on *Humility.*
- *Avarice*, to be conquered by a meditation on *Generosity.*
- *Lust*, to be conquered by a meditation on *Chastity.*
- *Envy*, to be conquered by a meditation on *Charity.*
- *Greediness*, to be conquered by a meditation on *Abstinence.*

Anger, to be conquered by a meditation on *Patience*.

Coldness, to be conquered by a meditation on *Fervour*.

Six Sins against the Holy Ghost.—Despair of salvation. Undeserving confidence in salvation. Disbelieving revealed truth. Envy of grace given to others. Continuing in sin. Final impenitence.

These meditations should be accompanied by "acts" of faith, hope, love, resignation, etc.

The following is a typical *act of resignation*:[1]

"For the love of God and in conformity to His will I resign myself—

"To be deprived of any of the clothes that I have or may have, be they never so necessary.

"Or books, or of convenient lodging. . . .

"To be forced to wear such clothes as will make me appear ridiculous.

"To endure that my friends should neglect—yea, hate and persecute me.

"To be indifferent in what place, company, etc., I shall live.

"To live in all sorts of affliction.

"To suffer all manner of disgraces, contempts, affronts, infamies, and slanders.

"To be in life or in the manner of my death shameful and odious to others, and after death to be evil thought of and evil spoken of—nay, not to have any that will vouchsafe to pray for me. To be esteemed to have died in a state of damnation, dying a natural death to be esteemed by others to have destroyed myself, and thereupon to have my body ignominiously used, buried in the highway or under the gallows, to the eternal loss of my fame and unspeakable confusion of my kindred, friends, etc.

"To suffer weakness, sickness, pains, deformity.

[1] Ven. A. Baker, *Holy Wisdom*, pp. 632, 633.

"To suffer want of necessary sleep; hunger and thirst.

"To be affrighted with horrible and hideous sights of devils, etc.

"To die without senses or memory, to be distracted or mad.

"In the agony of death to endure such terror, afflictions and temptations as the devil doth then usually procure, etc."

The Imagination.

The imagination is to be called on to help the intellect in many meditations. In such meditations as the following the aspirant is recommended to place before his mental vision as clear a picture as possible.

The Sacred Heart of Christ.—To be imagined as a flaming and wounded heart, surrounded by a crown of thorns and surmounted by a cross.

The Child Jesus.—This meditation is to be carried out in church before the crèche.

The Five Wounds of Christ.—Before a crucifix.

The Blood of Christ.—If possible, in a church where there is a relic—as, for instance, at Mantua.

This meditation is divided into seven parts, thus:

1. The blood of the circumcision.
2. The bloody sweat of Gethsemane.
3. The blood after the scourging.
4. The blood from the crown of thorns.
5. Blood shed in carrying the cross.
6. Blood drawn by the nails.
7. The blood from the lance-wound.

Meditation on the Instruments of the Passion.—The cross, the nails, the lance, the sponge, the crown, the column to which Christ was bound during the scourging, the holy sepulchre.

The "Application of the Senses."

During meditation the aspirant should make use of what is known as the application of the senses. He should apply the sense of sight by using his visual imagination and seeing before him as vivid a picture as may be. He is to imagine words spoken either by actors in the scene that he has evoked, or by his own voice in commenting thereon, or in making prayers appropriate to the occasion. As the sense of taste cannot be applied in similar fashion, he is bidden taste interiorly the bitterness of the sufferings of his Lord, or the sweetness of God's love towards him. With regard to smell, the devout person is to respire, as it were, the perfume of holiness or the stench of sin, or imagine to himself the corruption of hell. He is also taught to make imaginative use of the sense of touch—*i.e.*, to fancy that he is touching our Lord's garments, or that he feels upon his limbs the warning heat of the eternal flames.

Colloquies.

The imagination may also be stimulated by "familiar colloquies," when the seeker pictures to himself Jesus, the Virgin Mary, one of the saints or his guardian angel as actually present, and imagines that he is carrying on a conversation of an edifying nature with them. This is a meditation that may be continued even while the man or woman is employed on some active business.

Ignatian and Sulpician Methods of Meditation.

To show, however, how extremely formal and intellectual a meditation can be, I give outlines of the Ignatian and Sulpician methods as set forth by Father Devine.[1]

[1] *A Manual of Mystical Theology*, pp. 209 *sqq.*

Ignatian Method

Preparatory Prayer:

Faith. O God, I firmly believe that Thou art here present.

Adoration. I adore Thee from the abyss of my nothingness.

Humility. Lord, I ought now to be in hell on account of my sins.

Sorrow. I am grieved for having offended Thee.

Petition:

Eternal Father, through the merits of Jesus and the prayers of Mary, give me grace to draw fruit from this meditation.

Offering.

To God the Father I give my memory; to God the Son my understanding; to God the Holy Ghost my will. To thee, my most sweet and loving Mother Mary, I give my imagination. (Ask the prayers of Guardian Angels and Patron Saints.)

Body of the Meditation.

Upon each point of the meditation the three powers of the soul must be exercised. The *understanding* should be exercised to know what hindrances have to be removed, and what means are to be used to insure success for the future. If by consideration of the first point the soul is moved to make acts of faith, hope, love of God, etc., it must continue to dwell upon them and to entertain the Holy Spirit. It must not proceed to the consideration of the second point so long as the impulse of the Holy Spirit lasts.

Memory. { Recall the subject-matter.
Make an act of faith.
This is meant for me.

Understanding.
- What must be my conclusion?
- Why?
  - Because
    - Proper.
    - Useful.
    - Necessary.
- How have I hitherto acted?

Resolutions.

Will.
- Practical
- Particular — as to
  - Time,
  - Place,
  - Persons.
- Humble

Affections.

- *God:* Adoration, joy, praise.
- *Self:* Hatred, confusion.
- *Mixed:* Thanks, sorrow, resignation.

Conclusion.

Examination.
- Examination of parts,
- Sorrow for what is ill done,
- Thanks for what is well done.

Conclusion.
- Colloquy with God.
- Choice of ejaculation.
- Resolution.

Petitions.
- *For self:* Perseverance, love of God, particular grace.
- *For others:* Confessor, parents, friends, superiors.
- *For Church:* Sinners, Dying, Souls in Purgatory.

The Sulpician Method of Meditation[1]

Preparation.

Remote (removing). { Sin, / The passions, / The thoughts of creatures.

Less remote. { Preparing subject overnight, / Reviewing the next morning, / Eliciting affections.

Proximate. { Putting ourselves in God's presence, / Acknowledging our unworthiness and the necessity of God's grace.

Body of the Prayer.

1. *Adoration*, or Jesus in our mouth.
2. *Communion*, or Jesus in our heart.
3. *Co-operation*, or Jesus in our hand.

In the first part, adore, praise, thank, love.

In the second part, transfer to the heart that which has been adored, praised, loved.

In the third part, co-operate with the grace received by fervent colloquies and generous resolutions.

(*a*) If we experience any secret operations of the Holy Spirit in our soul during the second part, we ought to keep ourselves in perfect silence and repose, in order that we may receive the full effect of such spiritual communications, and we ought not to go on while these communications last.

(*b*) The first part, *adoration*, is extremely important (1) because it leads us to contemplate our Lord as the Source of virtues, (2) because it makes us regard Him as our original Model, (3) because our adoration of God is a more perfect act of religion than our petitioning

[1] P. 210, slightly abridged.

Him for grace, (4) because it is the shortest, surest, most efficacious way to perfection.

(*c*) In the second part, *communion*, we must (1) convince ourselves, chiefly by motives of faith that the grace which we ask for is most important for us; (2) we must strive to see how greatly we are at present in need of that grace, and how many opportunities of acquiring it we have lost; (3) we must pray for it with simplicity.

(*d*) In the third part, *co-operation*, we make our resolutions, which must be (1) particular, or, if general, united with particular ones; (2) present, or likely to be tested that very day; (3) efficacious—that is, such as will be carried out with fidelity, and such as we explicitly intend to carry out with fidelity.

Conclusion.

This consists in three acts.

1. *In thanksgiving* for the graces which God has given us in prayer, for having endured us in His presence, and for having enabled us to pray.

2. *We must beg pardon* for the faults we have committed in our prayer through negligence, lukewarmness, distraction, inattention, and restlessness.

3. *We must put it into the hands of our Blessed Lady* to offer it to God, in order to supply our defects and to obtain all blessings.

Then we should, according to St. Francis de Sales, form for ourselves a *spiritual nosegay*—that is, resolve to call to mind frequently some thought which has moved us during meditation. We should never depart from prayer without begging God's grace for parents, for confessors, for brethren, for sinners, and for the souls in purgatory.

Many comments might be passed on these methods of meditation. To some people they merely seem a tiresome way of making an easy thing difficult and of freezing the sweet natural flow of prayer into cold and repellent ice. The most notable thing, however, to my mind about the formal meditations is that they are the

outcome of generations of practical experience. Quaint they may be. Burdened with scholastic psychology they certainly are. Unnatural they probably appear. But they have this one great merit: they *work*. Generations of devout men and women have used them and derived profit from them.

This is particularly true of the most famous of all schemes of meditation—*Manresa*, the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius.[1] Though it is so well known and easily accessible, I cannot omit a short account of it.

Manresa.

The meditations should, if possible, be carried out during a retreat of thirty days, divided into four "weeks" of irregular duration. During these four weeks the penitent is to pass through, on a small scale, as it were, the stages of the Mystic Way—*Purgation*, *Illumination*, and *Sanctification*. His progress, as observed by his spiritual director, is to decide when he may pass from one stage to another.

During the first week the subject for his meditations is *Sin*, Mortal Sin and its consequences. In order that his surroundings may as far as possible harmonize with his thoughts, the penitent is to darken his cell, to sit alone, to prostrate himself before a crucifix, or to kneel in humility. He must banish from his mind not only all pleasant thoughts about his own life or the world of natural beauty, but even all consideration of the joyful truths of religion. He is constantly to keep in mind his own wretchedness, and to have his sins perpetually before him.

A meditation on the sin of the rebel angels and their terrible punishment prepares him for the contemplation of the hell that awaits him in retribution for his own wickedness.

"Imagine to yourself," urges St. Ignatius, "the height, the breadth, and the depth of hell."

[1] *Manresa, or The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Burns and Oates. No date).

In hell a triple society will form the torment of the condemned.

The society of your body, which to the infectious corruption of a corpse will unite all the sensibility of a living frame.

The society of devils.

The society of an infinite number of wretched creatures damned like yourself.

"Represent to yourself an assembly so hideous that even in the galleys and prisons of human justice you could not find anything like it; an assembly of all that the earth has borne of licentious men, of robbers, of assassins, of parricides. . . ."

St. Ignatius will also have his penitents consider how the reprobate in hell is punished through all the powers of his soul. Imagination, memory, understanding, will —all are to contribute to his torture. Regrets, remorse, jealousy, desires, even impotent reaching after God, conspire to torment the unhappy being. His senses, too, remain like devils heightening his anguish.

"*Imagine!*" cries St. Ignatius.

"1. *The torment of sight.* The aspect of this dreary prison, of the damned, of the demons, of the cross of Jesus printed on the vaults, of these terrible words engraved on the gates of hell—EVER, NEVER, of those flames which roar round him.

"2. *The torment of hearing.* The groans of so many millions of the damned, the howls of their despair, their imprecations on themselves, their cries of rage as they invoke death or annihilation, the reproaches they address to themselves, the maledictions with which they load their accomplices, the noise of the flames devouring so many victims."

In like way the penitent is to meditate on the torments of *smell*, *taste* and *touch*, using in each case the "application of the senses." He is to consider, too, with a vain stretch of his shrinking imagination, the *torment of eternity*. "How many centuries will the damned be chained in this prison? *For ever.*

"Will God, then, never have pity on his misery? *Never.*"

Following on these considerations, the aspirant is to meditate on *his own death.* He is called on to picture to himself with the most minute and painful detail his own agony. The faintly lighted room, the weeping family, the priest, the sick man lying on his bed of suffering, on the one side of which stand devils ready to carry him to the eternal flames, on the other the guardian angel prepared to make a last stand for the precious soul. All these he is to conjure up and consider.

"This is my death," he is to say. "Those devils await my last faltering. It is for my soul that the angel strives."

When the agony is over, the penitent is to take himself in imagination to the graveyard, to spare himself nothing of the funeral scene, to hear the earth falling thick over his own coffin. He is to reflect how, but a few months after his death, the worms are devouring his flesh, and his weeping relatives are getting on very cheerfully without him. Thus fortified, he proceeds to meditate on *judgment.*

Jesus, erstwhile his Saviour, is now his Judge. The devil, the angels and a man's own conscience are the accusers, while the poor shrinking soul is the accused.

Flinging himself at the feet of the crucifix, the penitent ends the meditation with a fervent colloquy and prayer for pardon from his Lord.

After these terrible pictures, the meditations on venial sin, with which the first week closes, seem almost trivial by comparison.

Meditations for *the second week* are on *Christ as the Way of Salvation.*

From considering Christ as the King Universal, the penitent thinks lovingly of His incarnation and of all the details of His poverty and humility. It is at this point that St. Ignatius introduces what he calls "contemplation," but he evidently does not use the word in the technical sense that it has since acquired. His "con-

templations" are visualizations of scenes from the life of our Lord, accompanied by acts of adoration. The imagination and the affections are certainly to be more active than the intellect, but there is no suspension of the ordinary powers of the mind, nor that simple apprehension of God in one swift glance of the soul which seems to be the peculiar mark of contemplation properly so called.

In this chapter of *Manresa* is to be found the famous meditation on the *two standards*. The penitent is to imagine to himself a vast plain near Babylon, and, seated on a throne, the horrible and hideous figure of the arch-rebel Lucifer himself. Round him gather all the sinners of the earth, from the meanest to the most proud. All alike are plotting destruction for the souls of men.

Then over against this, in the fair plains near Jerusalem, represent to yourself Jesus of Nazareth, not enthroned, but in gentleness and simplicity mingling with the throng of saints and righteous men who surround Him. This company is adorned with all the virtues and with the celestial happiness which flows from them.

Under which standard will you range yourself?

This is the climax of the spiritual exercises—The hideousness of evil, contrasted with the beauty of Christ.

In the third week the meditations are designed to *confirm the soul in the way of holiness that it has chosen*. The consideration of the mystery of the Eucharist is the most important. The Passion of our Lord is also to be reverently considered.

During the *fourth week* the penitent may lay aside his sad and dreadful thoughts and comfort himself with dwelling on the love of God and the bliss of eternity. Christ after His resurrection and Christ glorified in heaven is to be his companion. The Virgin Mary is also to be saluted, and her right place as Mother of God and of the children of God assigned to her.

On the last day of the exercises the devotee is to draw

up plans for keeping alive in his heart the fervour that he has gained during his retreat.

The book closes with advice as to the particular and general examination of conscience, rules for penance and for the discernment of spirits (*i.e.*, how we may know whether what we feel comes from God or the devil), advice about almsgiving, manners of prayer, and so forth.

The Practice of the Presence of God.

Suitable alike for the Religious and for the layman, and perfect in the beauty of its simplicity, is the Practice of the Presence of God. For Brother Lawrence it was the one and all-sufficient meditation that he practised. We are not told, however, exactly how he set about it. St. Francis de Sales[1] recommends four methods of putting oneself in the presence of God.

1. Reflect on the omnipresence of God.
2. Reflect that God is in a particular manner in your heart.
3. Consider Jesus looking down on you from heaven.
4. Imagine Him by you, as you would imagine an absent friend.

Ribet[2] suggests that we may consider God, as it were, by painting, when we attribute to Him, as if they were so many colours, the perfections of creatures; and also after the manner of a sculptor, when we remove from Him, as if they were so many chips of useless marble, all imperfections and limitations. Rodriguez, however, is distrustful of any kind of effort of the imagination to picture, or make concrete, as it were, the presence of God, and declares that in his opinion a simple act of faith—*i.e.*, a mental affirmation, "I believe that God is present"—is the best.

[1] *Introduction to the Devout Life,* trans. Rev. T. Barnes, pp. 91-94.
[2] *La Mystique Divine,* vol. i., ch. ix.

The Holy Sentence.

The use of the holy sentence in meditation is apparently not widespread, though occasionally one finds it recommended. For instance, the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* writes:[1]

"And if thee list have this intent (of union with God) lapped and folden in one word, for thou shouldest have better hold thereupon, take thee but a little word of one syllable: for so it is better than two, for ever the shorter it is the better it accordeth with the work of the Spirit. And such a word is this word God, or this word Love. Choose thee whether thou wilt, or another: as thee list, which that thou likest best of one syllable. And fasten this word to thy heart, so that it never go thence for thing that befalleth. This word shall be thy shield and thy spear whether thou ridest on peace or war. With this word thou shalt beat on this cloud and this darkness above thee. With this word thou shalt smite down all manner of thought under the cloud of forgetting."

Some modern teachers believe in the use of the holy sentence. At times the aspirant will find that his mind lingers naturally over one word or sentence, and that his consciousness seems to be permeated with its meaning, to the exclusion of other thoughts. As he meditates, the actual words seem to fade, and he finds himself plunged straight into their meaning, apprehending truth directly, in a new mode. It is by the way of the holy sentence that the transition from meditation to contemplation is often made.

Results of Spiritual Exercises

In discussing the results of spiritual exercises it will be found convenient to consider, first of all, the effect that meditation has upon the aspirant; secondly, the visions and auditions which normally accompany, but which are in no way essential to, the soul's progress;

[1] P. 93.

lastly, the various states of consciousness which the mystic experiences.

The man who has devoutly and with sincere intention practised spiritual exercises may look confidently for some change in his character. He will find that he gradually ceases to be the centre of his own stage, and that the interest of his life, instead of concentrating upon himself, concentrates upon God. True, in the early days of his pilgrimage the mystic is so delighted with the favours that he receives and with the amazing events that take place in his inner life, that he cannot help gazing into his own soul with wonder and amazement. He soon perceives, however, that the beauty which he there sees is not his own beauty, but God's, while by contrast his own noisy selfish desires seem more petty and contemptible than ever before.

Two "purgations" are generally considered necessary before the mystic's will is finally brought into subjection to the will of God, and his character firmly established. The first he undertakes himself by ascetic discipline and by a certain progressive exchange of "values," whereby he learns to put things in their proper positions and to esteem them at their true worth. For instance, he should not teach himself to despise health, but he should prize it, not for the pleasure of luxuriating in physical sensations of well-being, but that he may employ it in the service of God. He will consider the pursuit of Truth not simply as exhilarating intellectual gymnastics, but as a right way of access to God, who is Himself Truth. Art becomes no longer mere pleasant gratification of the eye or the ear, but a manifestation of an aspect of the Divine. His conception of God changes. He sees God no longer as a Potentate from whom favours, whether material or spiritual, are to be coaxed, but as the Source and Goal of all good, for whose praise and service even eternity cannot suffice, and to whom the mystic offers not so much petition as adoration. The aspirant, by deliberate considering, rearranging, retouching his ideas about the Deity, arrives, little by little, at a state of

mind where he is uninterruptedly conscious of God and constantly aware of the working of His Spirit. When he has also humbled his will to the will of God, and when his heart is always full of love, he may be said to have entered upon the Unitive Life, the final stage of the mystic's progress here on earth.

This submission of the *will* is, according to all authorities, more important than anything else. A man may have had the most splendid visions, and performed deeds of heroism for his faith, but if his will is not united to the will of God he is no true mystic.

As Luis de Granada wrote:[1] "What the Beloved wills, the soul wills; that which displeases Him, displeases her; that which He loves or hates, that she loves or hates likewise, making no account of herself, her profit, her honour, or her contentment, but only of the contentment and honour of God; so that in all and through all she comes to have one willing and one nilling with Him—her will is one with the will of God."

Spiritual exercises also produce an increase of love. All writers on mysticism emphasize this, sometimes with a wealth of erotic imagery unacceptable to the modern mind. To quote but one simple passage, Luis de León, writing of the results of the state of "illuminative union," says:[2]

"It will kindle in them an ardent desire to serve Him, and make them to give Him their whole hearts, turned, as it were, into gold—that is to say, into love. It will make it their continual desire to pray that His kingdom may grow and His glory ever further and wider extend. It will give them hearts so united and made one with Him that they will pray for naught to the Father save through Him. From the fervour of their souls their ardent love will spring ever to their lips and issue therefrom in continual praise, which neither time shall put to silence, nor the end of the ages cause to cease—no, nor the very sun, should it stay in its course; for they shall

[1] See E. Allison Peers, *Studies of the Spanish Mystics*, p. 58.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 333.

praise Him so long as the love which inspires them shall endure, which is for ever and ever, and world without end."

The complete submission of the human will and the perpetual burning of the flame of love are not accomplished without the second purgation—namely, that sent by God. This is a certain subtle disciplining of the soul, most painful. The process is difficult to understand. Its chief sign seems to be intense desolation and aridity, when the mystic believes that God has abandoned him. Yet it is the presence and not the absence of the Divine that causes the anguish, for, as St. John of the Cross explains, the eyes of the aspirant are, as it were, dazzled by the glory of God which has been flashed upon his unaccustomed sight. The mystic is blinded and cannot see God, though he seeks Him in great distress. The "dark night" is caused, not by God withdrawing Himself, but by the seeker being unable to sustain the sight of His majesty. St. John of the Cross is the writer who has most vividly described the sufferings of the soul in this condition. "The brighter is a light, the more it darkens and blinds the pupils of the owl, and the more directly the sun is gazed upon, the greater the darkness caused to the visual organs, for it deprives them of power, so greatly does its strength exceed their weakness. So when this divine light of contemplation strikes the soul, which is not yet perfectly enlightened, it plunges it into spiritual darkness, because it not only transcends it, but it also blinds it and deprives it of the operation of its natural intelligence."[1]

This "dark night" may last for several years. St. John bids the penitent remain calm in the midst of his desolation, to persevere in his spiritual exercises, and to wait until God, in His good pleasure, calls him to perfect union.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 258. See also *The Dark Night of the Soul*, by St. John of the Cross, trans. David Lewis, with Introduction by Benedict Zimmermann.

Visions and Auditions.

Treated as comparatively unimportant and trivial by the mystics themselves, visions and auditions have aroused the liveliest curiosity and interest in people who have never experienced them. The simple-minded believer and the psychologist have alike devoted more attention to these cruder manifestations than they have to the subtle experiences which the mystics themselves chiefly prize. This is easy to understand. An account of a vision is picturesque and strikes the imagination. The hearer believes that something marvellous has taken place, or, if he be sceptical, that the seer is in an unusual pathological condition, worthy of study. The most exalted spiritual states are, on the other hand, incommunicable, and the mystic who feels that he has had direct contact with Ultimate Reality can do little to make plain the nature of his experience, however many words he may employ. The interest he arouses is, therefore, much less. The seer does not despise visions and auditions, though he is aware of the occasions for self-deception which they afford, but he considers them as of small value compared with genuine contemplation.

Orthodox writers divide visions into three kinds.

1. *Corporeal Visions, Locutions, Etc.* — When an angel, etc., is actually present and may be seen or heard by the senses in the ordinary way. It is not maintained that angels usually have visible bodies and voices audible to mortal ears, but that a discarnate spirit, wishing to appear on earth, takes particles of matter floating about in space, and temporarily clothes himself with a body. In view of the discoveries of modern physicists on the nature of matter and its extreme tenuity, the idea of its manipulation by the will of a spiritual being is not as preposterous as it would have seemed fifty years ago. Meditation and the practice of spiritual exercises are said to make the aspirant more capable of seeing these angelic bodies.

2. *Imaginary Visions.*—These are the kind most fre-

quently met with. Nothing is actually seen or heard by the senses, but the impression is received by the mind, and the seer feels that an angel, our Lord, or perhaps some holy object, is actually present. The explanation given is that a genuine contact with spirit is translated by the subconscious mind into symbolic presentations which affect the mystic as if they were real. Imaginary visions are those which should be most critically scrutinized. The devil or your own imagination can deceive you.

3. *Intellectual Visions.*—God, without the co-operation of the senses, the imagination, or the memory, produces the impression (the *species impressa* of St. Thomas Aquinas) directly on the mind. In intellectual visions there are no images seen and no sensations of words actually heard. An intellectual vision is a pure and direct apprehension of Truth. There is not nearly so much danger of self-delusion in the case of intellectual visions as of imaginary ones.

A few examples of visions will, perhaps, help us to form an opinion as to their real nature.

The following is from my manuscript collection. The writer is a woman of about thirty years of age, who had just become converted from Anglican to Roman Catholicism. She afterwards took the veil. "What I mean by a vision is something less definite than an apparition, something that is not seen or heard with physical eyes and ears, and yet something which the seer is quite sure does not proceed from his own imagination, although he cannot prove this to anyone else. I myself have experienced moments when it has needed an effort to realize that the walls and furniture around me were substantial facts at all, so unreal did they seem in comparison with the other things.

"You must know that from my childhood I have loved our blessed Lord very dearly—from about the age of ten, I should think, but I cannot fix a date, the growth has been so imperceptible. The various means that He used to teach me to love Him do not belong

to this story, neither does the process of absorption into the Catholic Church, except in one detail. One thing held me back for a little while after I had begun to see clearly, and that was the amount of devotion paid to our Lady.

"One day, however, when I was reading my daily portion of Scripture, I came across some words that I had never thought of particularly before—Elizabeth's words: 'Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?' I cannot explain my whole train of thought, but in a flash my doubts as to the rightness of this devotion were set at rest for ever. A day or two afterwards I asked for instruction, and on the same day began to use a rosary. By the time of my reception, three weeks later, my feelings had undergone such a change that I began to have the most uncomfortable fear that my love for our Lady might supplant that which I cherished for her Son. I was far too reticent to tell my thoughts on the matter even to a priest, and in a very short time the foolish idea became a torment.

"About a fortnight after my reception I had received Holy Communion for about the fifth time, and was making my thanksgiving. I was kneeling in a pew in the middle of the church with my eyes shut, but unconscious of myself or my surroundings. I can only describe in human language what happened, and therefore you will get only what I may call an approximate idea of the event. Our Lord took me by the hand and led me up to a chair on which was seated our blessed Lady. He presented me to her, but I do not know exactly what He said—my astonishment and confusion were too great. I fell on my knees beside her, and she put her arm round me and hid my face against her. For a few rapturous moments I kept still there and forgot our Lord's presence altogether. Then it suddenly flashed across me that such a position was presumptuous, and I faltered out: 'But I ought to be kissing your feet.'

"I was just going to do this when our Lady stopped me, saying: 'No, go back and kiss *His* feet.'

"This recalled our Lord's presence to me, and I turned back and fell down in adoration before Him.

"Soon I seemed to rouse myself and find myself back in the church again—where, of course, I had been all the time. I understood the vision—if such you would call it—to mean that although our Lady was full of love and tenderness for me, she would see that my love for her should never do anything but increase my love and devotion to our Lord."

The following account of a vision is taken from *The Living Touch*, by Dorothy Kerin.[1] Miss Kerin was, according to the verdict of the physician, in the last stage of phthisis, and blind owing to tubercular meningitis. Her death was hourly expected. Miss Kerin was deeply religious, and during her illness had thought much on spiritual matters. The account of the vision which wrought Miss Kerin's cure is given in her own words.

"I seemed to drift into space. I was no longer conscious of my body, but my soul was overflowing with joy. As I went, the way grew brighter until I saw in front of me a wonderful altar formed by angels. There were six at the back, and in front one more beautiful than the rest, holding a chalice, which he brought to me and from which he gave me to drink. Then they disappeared, and as they went they seemed to be chanting words which I could not understand.

"I passed on again, and soon I heard a great flocking sound and saw coming from every direction white-robed figures, some of whom were carrying lilies, while some had haloes. Their movements made lovely music, and they all looked as though they were coming and going with some definite purpose. As I looked I saw One coming towards me. I thought He was coming for me, and held out my hands towards Him, but He

[1] Pp. 7-9.

smiled and said: 'No, Dorothy, you are not coming yet.'

"Again I passed on, and this time I seemed to go a much greater distance until I could go no farther, when I heard a voice say 'Dorothy' three times. I answered: 'Yes, I am listening. Who is it?'

"Then a great light came all around me, and an angel took my hands in his and said: 'Dorothy, your sufferings are over. Get up and walk.'"

Then, to the utter astonishment of her friends, the patient got up from her bed, though she had not walked for five years, went downstairs, and helped herself to a good meal. Her body seemed to be restored to perfect health. These facts are attested by her doctor and nurses.

I take an interesting account of what the seer calls a "musical vision" from the *Life* of Frances Ridley Havergal.[1]

"In the train," writes Frances, "I had one of those curious musical visions which only very rarely visit me. I hear strange and beautiful chords, generally full, slow and grand, succeeding each other in most interesting sequences. I do not invent them; I could not; they pass before my mind, and I only listen. Now and then my will seems aroused when I see ahead how some fine resolution might follow, and I seem to *will* that certain chords should come, and then they do come; but then my will seems suspended again, and they go on quite independently. It is so interesting; the chords seem to *fold over each other* and die away down into music of infinite softness, and then they *unfold* and open out, as if great curtains were being withdrawn one after another, widening the view, till, with a gathering power and intensity and fulness, it seems as if the very skies were being opened before one, and a sort of great blaze and glory of music, such as my outward ears never heard, gradually swells out in perfectly sublime splendour.

[1] By her sister, pp. 151, 152.

"This time there was an added feature. I seemed to hear depths and heights of sound beyond the scale which human ears can receive, keen, far-up octaves, like vividly twinkling starlight of music, and mighty, slow vibrations of gigantic strings going down into grand thunders of depths, octaves below anything otherwise appreciable as musical notes. Then, all at once, it seemed as if my soul had got a new sense, and I could *see* this inner music as well as hear it, and then it was like gazing into marvellous abysses of sound, and up into dazzling regions of what, to the eye, would have been light and colour, but to this new sense was sound. Wasn't it odd? It lasted, perhaps, half an hour, but I don't know exactly, and it is very difficult to describe in words."

Here is another from my manuscript collection. The seer was accustomed to meditate with great regularity and to keep a careful account of the results of meditation. The particular meditation which produced this vision was a consideration of the mystery of the Incarnation with the visualizing of a cross, accompanied by the words from the Apostles' Creed, "*and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord.*" I give an extract verbatim from the record of meditations.

"I feel that I have had the most real experience of my life. *From* 8.55 *to* 9.0 short meditation with the usual repetition of the words 'and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord.' Very quiet. Sense of peace strong. Meditation becomes infinitely precious. 10.0: Try to sleep. Longing to meditate unbearably strong, but resist. 11.20: Can resist no longer. Assume posture, not rigid. Night very still, concentration almost perfect. Sense of all the infinity of heaven above, all the depths of star beyond star. Something is going to happen. Waiting, tensely. . . . Visualize a great wooden cross; stinging pain in palms very keen. And then, oh, my God! the cross is under me, and I nailed to it, unable to move. Pain of the nails appalling. Then with a great blaze of light Christ's essence comes down

to me, or wells up within me, giving spiritual joy unspeakable. This lasts for an appreciable length of time. At last I am left trembling in the dark, my heart beating like a mill-wheel. Strike a light, find the time exactly midnight. I write this. What has happened? I feel blinded. How can one live with God so near?"

We will leave aside for a moment the musical "vision," and confine our attention to the other three. In examining them, we may ask two questions—namely, why were they cast in these particular moulds, and did they correspond to any real spiritual experience?

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to point out that all the imagery is Christian imagery, and has definite connection with the seer's previous meditations and trains of thought. The Catholic convert has been using a rosary, where prayers to the Virgin alternate with prayers to God. Dorothy Kerin had been thinking of a heaven adorned with angels and songs. The writer of the manuscript from which the last account is taken had concentrated attention on a cross and repeated the words "and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord." In each case the meditations of the conscious mind had, over a considerable period of time, been influencing the unconscious, and determining the form in which a spiritual experience would be received. As the meditations had proceeded they had, I gather, become less and less discursive and intellectual, and had tended to group themselves round certain symbols, rich in associations. The symbol is the best nucleus for a "complex" of religious ideas.[1] The mystic meditates with a peculiar pleasure on symbols. Where a discursive meditation on the Atonement will produce nothing but weariness of the mind, a loving contemplation of a crucifix, the symbol of the Atonement, will arouse a glow of devotion in the heart of the devotee. Even practised theologians

[1] I had reached these conclusions before reading Freud and the New Psychologists. I have added a few sentences to my original remarks, but without any pretence of having dealt adequately with a difficult subject.

find difficulty in defining the Holy Spirit to their satisfaction, while the mystic discovers inspiration in symbols of the Holy Spirit, such as a dove or tongues of flame. In their affection for symbols the mystic and the poet meet. Where exact description and literal definition seem to build a tower of Babel in the bewildered plains of the mind, a symbol is like a lamp in the dark, a well of living waters, a tree of life. In a symbol whole clusters of ideas can be presented to the mind at a glance, and meditation on symbols makes them reveal more and more of their meaning. What lengthy description, for instance, could have expressed Christ's relationship to his followers half so well as the swift simile of the vine and the branches?

Symbols, of course, have not all got religious meaning. There are symbols of God in His various aspects, symbols of man in his relation to his Creator and to the universe, symbols of reproduction, and so forth. Some are confined to particular religions, a very few are common to all. The symbols, however, all seem to be those of elemental and basic facts and relationships, for with these the unconscious is specially concerned. It is asking too much of a vision that it should reveal an entirely novel fact to the intellect of the seer, since it presents concepts with which the mind is already familiar. There are no known cases, for instance, of a Hindu who had never heard of the Incarnation, experiencing a vision of our Lord. It is enough that a vision should be the translation by the unconscious mind to the conscious, of a veritable contact with spiritual reality.

May we not say that, *whenever the unconscious mind is considering any matter of vital importance, it thinks in symbols?* In other words, *symbols are the natural language of the unconscious*, when the unconscious is handling any question or experience of particular importance to the life of the ego. The unconscious, brought into contact with something which particularly arouses the emotions, reacts in symbols.

This law offers a simple explanation of the Freudian position. The patients who came to Freud were not normal healthy men and women; they were sexual neurasthenics. When he investigated the contents of their unconscious minds, he naturally found sexual symbolism. Having formed a theory, which worked in the case of the patients who came under his observation, he assumed that it was of universal application. Possibly, too, Freud himself had a suppressed sex-complex, and was naturally predisposed to explain all symbolism in terms of sex.

Visions and auditions are, then, it seems to me, to be understood in the following way: The mystic has a very real and vital spiritual experience. Especially in the early stages of his progress he is unable easily to apprehend and grasp the reality either in terms of thoughts or emotions. His unconscious mind, grasping at the experience, externalizes it in the form of visions or auditions. Take, for instance, the case of the crucifixion vision above, which certainly cannot readily be interpreted as symbolic of anything apart from the Christian religion. The seer had come into contact with the law of the universe, with the thought in the mind of God, which declares that whosoever loseth his life for God's sake shall find it; that is to say, that the condition of possessing one's soul and of living in the spiritual world, is self-sacrifice. To the Christian the most splendid as well as the most familiar example of self-sacrifice is, of course, the crucified Saviour. This mystic understood in a flash that he must have in himself something of the nature that was in Christ Jesus. His spirit cried out that he was willing for sacrifice, though his body might shrink from pain. Hence this acceptance of a fundamental spiritual law, together with the emotion that accompanied it, gave rise to the hallucination of the seer feeling himself crucified. The experience was a real one, as far as any experience can be said to be real—*i.e.*, it was the response of consciousness to an external stimulus—but of course there was no

actual cross present, nor hammer nor nails, though the marks of the stigmata were plainly visible on the mystic's palms.

We may conclude, then, with regard to visions, that the seer who has by meditation sensitized himself to the spiritual world is aware of some aspect of transcendent reality, and reacts to it through his unconscious mind which projects symbolic representations of his experience into his conscious mind. The people or objects he thinks he sees are not "all his own imagination," nor are they actually there before him. They are the pictorial transcription of spiritual facts which words cannot adequately describe, nor thought fully grasp. The effect of the visions on character is immediate and patent. Peace of mind, increase of love to God and mankind, perhaps a return to bodily health, attest that the experience was no mere illusion. Moreover, the mystic himself feels that he has received an irrefutable proof of the reality of God and of the validity of belief in Him.

The audition of Frances Ridley Havergal does not differ fundamentally from the visions that we have been considering. Her experience was twofold—of the harmony and of the beauty of the universe—her apprehension of reality being translated by her unconscious mind into the symbolic form of music instead of pictures. I have come across one or two other cases of "musical visions" resulting in a firmer conviction of the essential harmony of all Creation. It is a noteworthy psychological fact that, at the core of the unconscious, music, rhythmic words and pictures seem to be much more closely related than they are in their final externalized form. One might almost say that it is "just a chance" whether a spiritual experience will be translated as music, words, or things seen.

Visions, even of the most orthodox kind, are always to be subjected to the keenest scrutiny, and possible sources of error and delusion laid bare. The seer is bidden to beware of all visions which accord with his own secret desires, and which make for furthering of

cherished plans of his own. Pious women are warned to receive no visions which urge them to direct or control their spiritual superiors.

Père Poulain enumerates seven kinds of inquiries which are to be made concerning the visionary.[1]

1. What are the person's natural qualities? Is his mental equilibrium perfect? Is his mind weakened by fasts, vigils, etc.?

2. What is the degree of education that he has received? Sometimes the apparently marvellous is merely derived from books or conversations with others, which have been forgotten by the seer.

3. What virtues does the person possess? Have the visions created a centre of moral energy? Do they produce humility? "It is a sign of pride, and therefore of illusion, to have a craving to divulge the graces that we believe ourselves to have received."

4. What extraordinary graces of Union with God (contemplation) does the person believe himself to have received? Unless he has got beyond the Prayer of Quiet, the chances are against his revelations and visions being divine.

5. Has he made predictions, and have many of them come true?

6. Has he suffered great trials before or after the revelations? "It is scarcely possible that crosses should not accompany extraordinary graces."

Also, has he shown patience in the face of disbelief in his visions and mission?

7. Has he taken these three precautions: (*a*) Fearing to be deceived; (*b*) perfect frankness with directors; (*c*) not desired the revelations?

The seer is further warned that any manifestations which have to do with the senses of *taste* or *smell*, or which depend for their meaning on curious combinations of words, puzzlewise, are probably false. The chief test, however, is whether the visions make the seer more humble and more virtuous.

[1] *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, pp. 351 *sqq.*

"*Miraculous Powers.*"

Besides seeing visions, the devotee, as he progresses in spirituality, often acquires powers which are considered as supernatural. The Christian saints have not been behind the holy men of other religions in their ability to work miracles. Gifts of healing, automatic writing and thought-reading are the most usual, but the list of "miraculous" powers would include foretelling the future, fasting for exceptionally long periods, thought-transference, clairvoyance and communication with the spirits of the dead. Cases of all these are well attested and await investigation by unprejudiced biographers and psychologists. These manifestations of unusual powers are not confined to saints in the Middle Ages, when an uncritical public was predisposed to believe in wonders. For instance, the Curé d'Ars, Father Mathew the Irish priest, Father John of Cronstadt, and in our own day good people of lesser fame, such as Mr. Hickson and Mrs. Bainbridge, have all shown gifts of healing that would once have been considered miraculous. The whole of Madame Guyon's *Torrents* was written automatically, and so were many of Miss Havergal's hymns. Photisms were a common occurrence during the last two great revivals in Wales, while levitations are said to have been observed during revival meetings in the Salvation Army. My own experience certainly tends to confirm the opinion that the regular practise of spiritual exercises develops certain psychic powers. These powers may, however, prove a hindrance to the progress of the soul in true spirituality.

The facts, anyhow, seem to show that human beings are possessed of certain latent powers which are usually allowed to lie dormant, but which might be evoked deliberately by mental training even of a non-religious kind. If the aspirant to holiness finds that he is acquiring certain gifts, he should be warned that he must use them to the glory of God or not at all. Otherwise he will

become a "magician" rather than a saint. The true mystics have generally been somewhat embarrassed and puzzled by their supernormal powers, feeling that these might lead them down devious by-paths away from the main trend of the Mystic Way.

Contemplation.

From the point of view of the mystic himself, the most important result of spiritual exercises is *the change from meditation to contemplation.* As we have said before, the progress of the devotee may be described in two ways. We may point out the dispositions of mind which become habitual to him as he continues his pilgrimage. For instance, St. John of the Cross, following earlier writers, has, in *The Dark Night of the Soul,*[1] spoken of ten degrees of the Mystic Ladder, which he explains in the following terms:

"1. The first degree of love makes the soul languish to its great profit. The soul loses all pleasure in earthly things, and finds no comfort, support, or pleasure anywhere.

"2. On the second step the soul is unremitting in its search after God. So anxious is the soul that it seeks the Beloved in all things; all its thoughts, words, and works are referred to Him; in eating, sleeping, and waking, all its anxieties are about Him.

"3. The third step of the ladder renders the soul active and fervent so that it faints not. On this step the soul looks on great things as little, on many as few, its long service as short, by reason of the fire of love which is burning. Here the soul is in great pain and suffering because of the scantiness of its service; if it could lawfully die for Him a thousand times it would be comforted. It looks upon itself as unprofitable in all that it does, and its life as worthless.

"4. The soul falls into a state of suffering on account of its longing for union with God. It has so subdued

[1] Ed. cit., chs. xix, xx.

the flesh that it is as regardless of it as a tree of its leaves.

"5. On the fifth step the soul longs after God and desires Him with impatience. On this step the soul must either obtain its desires or die.

"6. On the sixth the soul runs swiftly to God, and ascends immediately to the seventh step.

"7. On the seventh step the soul becomes vehemently bold; in this intense and loving exaltation no prudence can withhold it, no counsel control it, no shame restrain it. Men of this spirit obtain of God what they so lovingly pray for.

"But consider well here, it is not lawful to be thus bold, unless the soul feels that the interior favour of the king's sceptre is extended to it, lest it should fall down the steps already ascended, in all of which humility must ever be preserved.

"8. On the eighth step the soul embraces the Beloved and holds Him fast. On this step of union the desires of the soul are satisfied, but not without interruption. Some souls ascend to this step, and at once fall back; if they did not and remained there they would have attained to a certain state of blessedness in this life.

"9. On the ninth step the soul is on fire sweetly. The blessings and the riches of God which the soul now enjoys cannot be described.

"10. The soul becomes wholly assimilated into God in the beatific vision which it now enjoys."

More to our purpose, however, is the classification of the transitory states of consciousness which accompany the mystic's habitual dispositions. It is nowhere claimed that the aspirant always passes through these stages *in order*, and that, having experienced an exalted state of consciousness, he never feels a less subtle one. He may very likely, for instance, have the Prayer of Quiet many times after he has experienced Spiritual Betrothal, and so on.

Let us first consider the orthodox—and to my mind far too academic—classification of supernatural states.

Père Poulain's Classification.

Père Poulain begins by distinguishing four degrees of ordinary prayer before he classifies supernatural prayer or contemplation. These four degrees are:

1. *Vocal prayer.*
2. *Meditation, also called methodical or discursive prayer.*
3. *Affective prayer.*
4. *The Prayer of simple regard or of simplicity.*

Definitions of the last two are as follows:[1] "We call affective prayer that mental prayer in which the affections are numerous or occupy much more space than the considerations and the arguments."

The Prayer of simple regard or of simplicity is[2] "a mental prayer where intuition in a great measure replaces reasoning, and the affections and resolutions show little variety and are expressed in few words."

The important thing to note about these forms of prayer is that they can be produced by the devotee at will, and that they fall short of contemplation, in which a special action of divine grace is needed.

Père Poulain now gives *four stages of mystic union.*[3]

1. *The incomplete mystic union, or the prayer of quiet.*
2. *The full or semi-ecstatic union.*
3. *The ecstatic union, or ecstasy.*
4. *The transforming or deifying union, or the spiritual marriage of the soul with God.*

He further adds definitions of these, in the following terms:[4]

"1. *The Prayer of Quiet*, when the divine action is not strong enough to hinder distractions, or, briefly, when the imagination still preserves its liberty.

"2. *Full Union*, when it possesses the following characteristics: (*a*) Its strength is so great that the soul

[1] *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, p. 7.
[2] P. 8. [3] P. 53. [4] P. 54.

is *fully* occupied with the divine object: (*b*) on the other hand, the senses continue to act more or less, so that it is possible by a greater or lesser effort to put ourselves into relations with the exterior world by speaking, walking, etc.

"3. *Ecstasy*, when the divine action has a considerable force and all outside communications with the senses are interrupted or almost entirely so. Thus we are no longer able to come out of our prayer at will.

"4. *The Transforming Union, or Spiritual Marriage*, is a mystical state containing three principal elements: (*a*) A union that is almost permanent, persisting even amidst exterior occupations, and this in such a manner that the two different operations do not interfere with one another; (*b*) a transformation of the higher faculties as to their manner of operation (hence the name of transforming union); (*c*) generally a permanent intellectual vision of the Blessed Trinity or of some divine attribute."[1]

All other kinds of contemplation, according to Père Poulain, such as supernatural sleep, inebriation, jubilation, wound of love, etc., are only different ways of being of the four degrees.

I add short examples, given by Père Poulain, of the four stages of contemplation.

1. *The Prayer of Quiet.*—Experience of Father Lallemant:[2]

"When after a long cultivation of purity of heart *God would enter into a soul and manifest Himself to it openly by the gift of His holy presence* . . . the soul finds itself so delighted with its new state that it feels as if it had never known or loved God before."

2. *Full Union.*—From a letter of St. Teresa's to Father Rodrigo Alvaraz:[3]

"When all the faculties of the soul are in union . . . they can then do nothing whatever, because the understanding is, as it were, surprised. The will loves more

[1] P. 283. [2] P. 77. [3] P. 241.

than the understanding knows; but the understanding does not know that the will loves, nor what it is doing, so as to be able in any way to speak of it. As to the memory, the soul, I think, has none then, nor any power of thinking, nor are the senses awake, but rather as lost, so that the soul may be more occupied with the object of its fruition; so it seems to me."

3. *Ecstasy.*—Experience of the Ven. Mary of the Incarnation, Ursuline, at the age of twenty-eight:[1]

"While I was rapt in God by this sublime contemplation, I gradually became entirely absorbed by the ineffable vision of the Divine Word. He caressed my soul as being wholly His. . . . Sometimes a ray of light brought back my thoughts to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and then I felt filled with confusion at having forgotten them, as it were, for a moment. . . . But soon I was again unconsciously rapt and absorbed by the Word, in whom I once more lost myself as before."

4. *The Transforming Union, or Spiritual Marriage.*—Experience of the Ven. Anne Madeleine de Rémuzat:[2]

"My God, Thou hast willed to *divinize my soul*, so to say, by transforming it into Thyself, *after having destroyed its individual form.* . . . God has made me see and taste His divine perfections. It is an abyss of delight which is all the greater and more excellent in that it is contained in the *simple* view of the essence of God. . . . Do not ask me what took place; it was neither light, nor taste, nor a suffering, nor a full joy, but *God Himself*, such as He is, and in so far as He can be received by a vile creature."

Mgr. Farges' Classification.

Mgr. Farges, an ardent follower of St. Teresa, names the four stages of mystical contemplation thus:

[1] Pp. 269-270. [2] Pp. 296-297.

1. Prayer of Passive Recollection and Quiet.
2. Prayer of Union.
3. Prayer of Ecstatic Union.
4. Prayer of Perfect Union, or Spiritual Marriage.

He explains that the difference between these states is not merely one of *degree*, but of *kind*. "It is a question," he says,[1] "of specific differences."

Of the Prayer of Passive Recollection and Quiet he observes:[2] "God suddenly takes hold of the faithful soul, not only during prayer or meditation, but even in the midst of the most ordinary material occupations. Then all at once the soul finds itself—it knows not how—separated from the objects which surround it, thrown back wholly on its inward self, absorbed by a thought, as yet confused, but most profound, of the presence of God within it, as though warned that God is about to speak, and His voice to make itself felt in a most complete inward solitude."

The Prayer of Union is[3] "a most intimate union of the soul with God, produced by a true and undoubted contact with the divine reality which dwells within us. It is prepared for by the complete suspension of the interior powers, and followed by a sense of absolute certitude in the truth of this ineffable meeting."

He also includes in this state "mystical jubilation," which is also called "spiritual inebriation," and "mystical sleep" the normal reaction after the ecstasy of spiritual inebriation. There are three essential differences between "mystical sleep" and natural sleep. In mystical sleep one thinks of God; one remembers Him on waking; and one sleeps passively beneath His will.

The Prayer of Ecstatic Union somewhat resembles the first Prayer of Union, but is more intense. The chief difference appears to be the total estrangement of the senses. The ecstatic is for the time being completely unconscious of the outside world. The will and the

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 118. [2] P. 120. [3] P. 153.

understanding are, however, awake to spiritual realities, and vastly strengthened by the grace of God.

This prayer Mgr. Farges divides into three kinds[1]—*Ecstasy*, properly so called, *Rapture*, which is more sudden in its onset, and the *Flight of the Spirit*, a rapture of special intensity, when the soul seems to separate itself from the body and to take its flight heavenwards.

Finally, we have the *Prayer of Perfect Union, or Spiritual Marriage*. This[2] "is an experimental knowledge and a most profound and permanent consciousness, not only of the presence of God in the soul, but also of his most intimate, familiar, and indissoluble union therewith." The eyes of the soul are opened and she beholds God.[3]

An Ecstatic (Marie Lataste).

With all due deference to the learned writers who have fitted the spiritual experiences of the Christian into formal classifications, I cannot help thinking that their dicta are arbitrary and artificial. There is no hard and fast delimitation between one state of consciousness and another, and ecstasies cannot be labelled and ticketed like specimens in a museum. A spiritual emotion is fluid and mobile; at one moment consciousness may be active, at the next dormant; now the experience may seem to be of a divine presence, in a minute it has flashed into a sense of light or music; consciousness of the self and of its moral needs flickers and merges into awareness of God; thought is now free, now impeded by something transcending thought, now lulled altogether; images arise, dazzle the soul, vanish again; peace and joy pass like waves across the mind. The more intensely the mystic experiences, the less is he able to stand apart from himself and to take notes of what is happening.

[1] P. 168. [2] P. 176.

[3] For a further discussion of mystical states of consciousness the reader is referred to Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism*.

The more exalted the state, the less is it susceptible of description. Under such circumstances, any classification can be only approximate. One can but indicate vague general outlines of states of consciousness. The general progress of the mystic is, nevertheless, along a recognizable way. One landmark in particular stands out clearly—the transition from meditation to contemplation, from normal to supernormal consciousness.

In order to study the progress of the mystic, I have taken a few pages from the life of a humble French girl, Marie Lataste, lay-sister of the Sacré-Cœur, Paris. She came of a peasant family, and was born at Mimbaste, Dax, in the year 1822. The fact that she knew nothing of mysticism, and could not know what manner of experiences might await a devout girl of her temperament, gives a peculiar value to her autobiography. Her spiritual adventures are set forth in letters written to her confessor, at his special command.

From the age of eleven Marie had practised spiritual exercises, her favourite devotion being the watch before the Blessed Sacrament. While at work in the fields, however, she meditated constantly on divine matters. She is said to have been a sullen and intractable child, but, as a result of her visions, her character became most lovable, so that all who met her were attracted by her sweetness.

One day, when she was still a girl in her teens, she felt a special attraction drawing her to go and pray in the village church. There a vision of great splendour awaited her, for she beheld our Lord Himself upon the altar, surrounded by His angels. At first she could not see Him with perfect distinctness, for a tenuous cloud appeared partially to conceal Him. The joy which filled Marie's heart was indescribable. Fearing, nevertheless, to draw near, she retired bashfully to a corner of the church, where she remained with her eyes fixed upon her Lord. Meanwhile her heart seemed each instant to be drawn more closely to Him, and as the ardour of her love became stronger, so did the vision become more

and more luminous to her bodily eyes. At last Jesus descended from the altar and approached, calling her benignantly by name, and raising His hand to bless her. Then she beheld Him with perfect clearness in the brilliant light which shone round Him.

From 1840 to 1842 she declares that she beheld our Lord daily at the elevation of the Host.

"Sometimes," she writes,[1] "Jesus manifested Himself to me in my heart, which then became to me like a magnificent temple, the entrance to which was never forbidden me. I saw Him in my heart as really as I do in the church, and I offered to Him my acts of reverence and adoration. There was in my heart an altar, a tabernacle, a throne, a railing. The altar was of gold, the tabernacle of gold, the throne of gold, the railing of gold. There was also a magnificent lamp, the light of which was more brilliant than the sun. My angel guardian used to light it before Jesus entered into my heart."

So far the mystic's progress is easy to follow. At first her experience of the Divine is as something too glorious for her to look upon, something awe-inspiring and majestic. The very ardour of her love, however, gives her strength to look upon her Lord, and she feels His gracious love towards her. He is still conceived as wholly outside herself. The next step is the building of a dwelling-place for Him in her heart, where, under familiar symbols, she pictures to herself the indwelling of Christ in the heart of the believer. Marie, in the simplicity of her mind, imagined that all Christians had experiences similar to her own, and was surprised and a little distressed when she learned from her director that they were unusual and that he required of her a description of them in writing. Penmanship and spelling were a labour to her, but she managed to write down an account of her state of consciousness, illuminating in its complete artlessness.

[1] *The Life of Marie Lataste*, ed. E. H. Thompson, p. 28.

"I experience," she says,[1] "no distressing bodily sensation either when Jesus speaks to me, or previously. My body seems neither active nor passive. I cannot tell you precisely what is the state. It appears to me that it is without movement, that it has not the use of its senses; that all activity remains within my soul. When Jesus wishes to speak to me or to manifest Himself to me, I feel myself attracted to Him, and I move towards Him either bodily or in spirit. When able to go to the church, I kneel either on the floor or on a chair; I think of Jesus, I adore Him, I give Him my heart, I turn my eyes towards the tabernacle. Then all disappears—church, altar, tabernacle; I see only Jesus (and the priest, if it is during Mass). It is a wholly new world. I walk, I kneel down, I go to Jesus, I place myself near His throne, and I listen to His words; and when Jesus has ceased to speak to me, and I am no longer speaking to Him, I feel myself drawn to return Him thanks, and then I find myself still on my knees, on the floor or on a chair, in the same position as at the moment when I knelt down in His presence. All this occurs without any disturbance or bodily suffering; only I feel a certain sweetness following on these relations of my soul with the Saviour."

"It is a wholly new world," says the simple child, her soul filled with awe and delight. In this new world Jesus Himself became Marie's guide and teacher.

"He taught me," she says, "the first degree of meditation. 'Regard My life as a picture, and reproduce this picture in yourself, by the desire of your heart and your soul.'"[2]

Here, under symbolic form, Marie was to picture to herself the need for a Christ-like life. The call was not to mere pious dreaming, but to heroic action.

Presently Jesus taught His penitent a higher kind of mental prayer.[3] Marie prepared herself to receive the divine communications by placing herself in spirit at the foot of the altar, to signify her humble and receptive

[1] P. 33. [2] P. 38. [3] P. 38.

frame of mind. Then she banished every irrelevant thought. Her meditation usually consisted of some scene from the Passion, which she pictured to herself as though she had been actually present. Finally, she laid her affections and devotion at the foot of the altar.

Of what she calls her third manner of meditation she writes as follows:[1] "It is, properly speaking, nothing but a simple elevation of my mind towards God, without considerations, without reflections, without affections, without resolutions. I raise my soul towards God, I unite myself to Him as my principle and my end. My whole occupation is to keep myself united to Him purely and simply, to repose peacefully in His Infinite Being, and to receive the different operations of His grace." Here we note the progressive simplification of the mystic's experience, a simple awareness of God and a passive reception of His influence replacing the violent and startling visions of the early days. Presently Jesus withdraws His visible presence altogether from Marie, though she still hears His voice. At first she feels the "new world" dark and lonely without the familiar sight of her Lord, but she understands that He wishes her to be courageous and to learn to make purer and more spiritual meditations. Of these experiences she can say little. She "loses herself in the immensity of God." He speaks to her without audible words, but by progressively illuminating her understanding. "All is spiritual!" she exclaims.

Finally, she is raised to the highest degree of prayer. Trembling at the strangeness of her new experience, she attains to contemplation. She writes:[2] "During my prayers, at Mass and at my communions I was, so to say, without any sentiment. I was completely absorbed by an ineffable sweetness which filled my whole soul and hindered me from reading as well as from praying, compelling me to follow the attraction of this sweetness."

Troubled at not being able to formulate thoughts or

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 39. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 173.

prayers, she consults her Master, who tells her she did well to yield to the attraction of divine love. He has allowed her soul, He says, to enter into His heart.

The progress of Marie's states of consciousness has been accompanied step by step by the progress of her character. Her influence over evildoers becomes notable. Even before she leaves her village to take up the humble work of a lay-sister to the ladies of the Sacré-Cœur, her humility and saintliness are manifest to all around her. Her friends ask in astonishment: "Was this the cross little girl who was such a trouble to her parents?"

As we accompany the French peasant girl along the Mystic Way, we can follow, more easily than by means of any formal classification, the stages of the mystic's pilgrimage. From the time of her first Communion she had the sense of *vocation*, of having been called, of standing in a peculiar and direct relationship to her Saviour. As she went about her work in the fields or in her mother's cottage, or as she knelt in the little church, she meditated on the communion established between herself and Christ. In her enthusiasm and eagerness to progress, she undertook many ascetic practices. Her director had to step in and moderate her zeal, bidding her not to sleep on the floor or to treat her body too harshly. As is the case with most mystics, she was assailed by violent temptations.

Her early spiritual experiences took the form of elaborate visions, accompanied by auditions, in which Christ, from appearing as wholly external to her, afterwards entered her heart and dwelt therein. Her prayers became simpler, a loving gaze towards God. Then she reached the strange state of mind when meditation and thought became impossible, visions ceased, and she experienced contemplation. Of this she can tell us little. She was able to describe her visions with great wealth of detail, but concerning the more exalted state she can say next to nothing. At first she felt desolate without her visions, but she came to understand that she was apprehending God in a purer mode.

Her progress, then, was the normal and natural progress of the mystic. Her early reactions to the Unseen were in the form of visions, which, while sweetening her character, intensified her self-consciousness. With her, as with other ecstatics, the transition from meditation to contemplation did not come without pain and dismay. When thought and vision cease, and the soul finds itself gathered up into one simple intense awareness of God, there is, at first, always an accompanying sensation of awe, so sharp as to merge into terror. The swift vanishing of ego-consciousness, the inhibition of the accustomed movement of thought—technically known as the "ligature"—the plunge into a hitherto undreamt-of expansion of consciousness, is so wonderful, so dazzling, that the soul hardly knows whether it lives or dies. Later on the mystic becomes somewhat accustomed to the new spiritual atmosphere, and communes more gently and confidently with the Divine.

It remains to ask one further question—namely, What is the object of the mystic's contemplation? There is but one answer: God Himself.

Visions may be of saints and of angels, of symbols or words. Contemplation may be of different kinds—calm or rapturous, momentary or lasting an appreciable length of time; it can have but one object—God.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

INCOMPLETE and fragmentary as my work has been, I have said enough, I think, to make clear the following facts:

1. There exist in all religions men and women who are not satisfied with ritual or theological religion, but who demand first-hand contact with the Unseen.

2. These people have found by experience that they can train themselves for the communion that they desire, and have, accordingly, evolved certain systems of meditation which have proved valuable.

3. Following on the use of spiritual exercises, recognizable states of mind occur. These states cannot be accurately classified, but their broad outlines can be indicated. The most highly prized of the states is one in which an expansion of the consciousness takes place, the sense of the self being much diminished or lost altogether.

4. The aspirant's meditations determine the form that his experiences will take.

5. The states of consciousness are similar in the devotees of all religions. What differs is the interpretation given to them.

Let us further examine this last statement. In reading the works of mystics of all times and creeds, we are struck by a note of eagerness, of impatience, of desire to progress. The aspirant disciplines himself, meditates, prays, all with the object of pressing forward to some distant goal. Visions, feelings of ardour, temporary dejection, merely serve to inflame his zeal. At last, however, something happens. He reaches a state of mind when he is conscious that his feet are on solid

rock, that he has attained to something fundamental. He may long to return and to touch it again, but he is satisfied. He is in contact with something real.

Now we may contrast the explanations given of this attainment. The Buddhist looks no further than the state of mind itself. He knows that his longing is answered; the cruel fire of worldly desires dies down, and Nirvana is his; but he asks no further questions. To the believer in God it seems incredible that a mystic should be content with a subjective explanation of this state of consciousness, which, from the peace and joy and certainty which it gives, can be nothing else than a consciousness of the Divine. The Buddhist, however, contents himself with observing that the state is good. His feet are indeed upon a rock, but he gives the rock no name.

When the Hindu experiences this same contemplation, he feels the affinity between his own soul and the Soul of the Universe. "I am That!" he cries joyfully. He interprets his experience as an experience of an impersonal God, and that suffices him. Passively, dreamily, he submits himself to communion with the spiritual, believing that knowledge has lifted him above need for action.

The Sufi, with his keen and poetic nature, passes, like some swift horseman, in pursuit of his soul's desire, until he, too, reaches his goal. His delight expresses itself in passionate and colourful description. He is intoxicated with the glory of the One. The One, however, is not the austere and distant God of the Koran, but the Spirit of the Whole in which the Sufi may merge his individuality. It is certain that he, as the Hindu, explains his highest experience in the terms of Pantheism.

The Christian interprets his communion with the Divine by the light of the revelation he has received through Jesus Christ. He applies the moral test to his visions and raptures, asking whether or not they have made him a better man. He communes with a God who is both Immanent and Transcendent, and who has been

made known in the Person of our Lord. He finds in contemplation not only a resting-place for his soul, but an incentive to action. Following the example of their Master, the Christian mystics have come down from the heights of spiritual communion not only to preach the good news that human and divine can meet, but to tend the sick, to care for the poor, and to engage in the simplest and humblest of everyday tasks. Stephen Grellet rising from a sick-bed to succour his fever-stricken neighbours, St. Teresa sweeping the corridors of the convent, St. François de Sales giving homely directions for the health of his nuns, are living up to the traditions of Christian mysticism as truly as when they are beholding visions. Ecstasies and raptures which end in mere dreaming are of no value in the Christian life.

"The two great functions of the mystical life," says a contemporary writer, Dom Savinien Louismet, one of the Benedictines of St. Mary's Abbey, Buckfast, "are Divine Contemplation and Saintly Action. Mystical life is simply life with God; simply a conscious, sustained, loving attention to God. The mystic alone does full justice to his Christianity. The mystic alone is worthy of the name of man, because he alone grasps the divine purpose of life. The others are simply beasts of burden, or beasts of prey, or beasts of pleasure, or beasts of pride.

"God is life, and the mystic alone is wise enough to enjoy God. Oh, that all men might become true mystics!"[1]

[1] *Mysticism True and False,* pp. 143-145.

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